



SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Psychology

Master's Program Student Handbook

Fall 2012

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M.S. Program Objectives and Emphasis

The Master's Degree in Applied Psychology prepares students for jobs that require the application of psychological knowledge to the workplace or to community settings. This involves training in theory, research, and practice. Although some students continue study for a Ph.D. degree, most accept challenging jobs in public, private, or non-profit field settings upon graduation.

The program has two emphases: a) Industrial/Organizational Psychology and b) Program Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. Both emphases are based on a scientist-practitioner model. Thus, graduates from the Applied Psychology program learn how to meet the opportunities and challenges faced by researchers working in the field, by participating in the design, conduct, communication, and application of results of research while working with practitioners and lay persons in applied settings. One key component of training in applied psychology at San Diego State University is a supervised internship involving the application of classroom learning and acquisition of new skills in a field setting. Students collaborate directly with psychologists and others working in the field.

The Master's program in Applied Psychology at San Diego State University provides advanced training both for recent graduates and for individuals who have been in the workforce for a number of years. The program is designed to take two to three years to complete. It is a full-time program, and therefore serious commitment to graduate training is expected. Funding in the form of assistantships is available so that students can give their full attention to their graduate studies.

M.A. Program Objectives and Emphasis

The Master of Arts program offers students the opportunity to pursue their study of psychology at the graduate level and to prepare themselves for Ph.D. programs in a variety of areas. It is particularly appropriate for students who need advanced work to strengthen their profiles in preparation for application to Ph.D. programs, or for those who wish to explore graduate level work before making a commitment to Ph.D. training. Note: Students completing the Master of Arts program will be treated fairly but in no special way with regard to their application to the Joint SDSU-UCSD Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology.

Students take seminars in major areas of Psychology and have the opportunity to develop an emphasis in a chosen area by additional course selection and research. Areas of emphasis include behavioral and cognitive neuroscience, learning and cognition, developmental psychology, social/personality, and physical and/or mental health research.

In general, the program is research oriented. It does not offer instruction in such technical skills as intelligence testing, and does not have a counseling practicum for development of clinical skills. There are many opportunities to gain valuable laboratory experience in conducting research, including experimental studies working with human participants in non-clinical areas.

Program Requirements (M.S. Program)

The Master of Science degree requires a minimum of 38 units of graduate-level course work, including required courses and electives. The required courses are designed to provide students with a thorough background in the major theories and findings in their chosen emphasis (i.e., Program Development, Implementation, and Evaluation or Industrial/Organizational Psychology), including research methods and statistics in psychology.

Students should take advantage of their electives to supplement effectively the curriculum offered in the Applied Psychology program. Students in Industrial/Organizational Psychology may find courses in Business, Economics, Educational Technology, and Law particularly relevant for their elective. Students in the Program Development, Implementation, and Evaluation concentration have their choice of three electives, and are expected to use those electives to pursue a focused specialization. Relevant courses may be found in Social Work, Public Health, Education, and Public Administration. All students should consult with their major advisor to design a program of study that best matches their interests. The program of study must receive final approval from the Graduate Advisor.

Core Requirements for the M.S. Program

PSY 600	Research Orientation	2 Units
PSY 670A-670B	Advanced Statistics	6 Units
PSY 675	Seminar in Psychological Measurement	3 Units
PSY 799A	Thesis	3 Units

Required Courses for Emphasis in Industrial/Organizational Psychology:

PSY 621	Seminar in Personnel Psychology	3 Units
PSY 622	Seminar in Organizational Psychology	3 Units
PSY 630	Seminar in Program Evaluation	3 Units
PSY 721	Adv. Seminar in Personnel Psychology	3 Units
PSY 722	Adv. Seminar in Organizational Psychology	3 Units
PSY 792	Internship in I/O Psychology	6 Units
Graduate Elective (with approval of program coordinator)		3 Units

Required Courses for Emphasis in Program Evaluation:

PSY 621	Seminar in Personnel Psychology	3 Units
-OR- 622	Seminar in Organizational Psychology	
PSY 630	Seminar in Program Evaluation	3 Units
PSY 730	Advanced Seminar in Program Evaluation	3 Units
PSY 791	Internship in Program Evaluation	6 Units
Graduate Electives (in a focused applied area)		9 Units

Total Coursework Required for M.S. (Including Internship) = 38 Units

ALL DEFICIENCIES MUST BE ADDRESSED BY THE END OF THE FIRST YEAR IN THE PROGRAM, SO PLEASE PLAN ACCORDINGLY!

Timeline of Events

The following is a rough timeline describing significant events students will experience and activities they will participate in as part of the M.S. program in Applied Psychology. In addition to the courses and activities listed, there is an annual student review (usually in mid-April) for which students need to prepare a report and meet with program faculty to review progress, obtain feedback about performance and progress, and set goals for future progress. Note that each student's experience in the program is unique and is expected to deviate somewhat from the events listed below.

SAMPLE TIMELINE

(Note: Timelines for individual students may vary)

Fall of Year 1

Typical Courses: I/O

PSY 600 (two units)
 PSY 670A
 PSY 621 (or 622)
 PSY 797 (lab research)
 Undergraduate deficiencies

Typical Courses: Program Evaluation

PSY 600 (two units)
 PSY 670A
 PSY 621 or 622
 PSY 797 (lab research)
 Undergraduate deficiencies

Semester goals for both I/O and Program Evaluation emphases:

<u>What</u>	<u>When</u>
Take statistics placement exam	Prior to beginning of semester
Meet with faculty to discuss research opportunities and thesis topics	By mid-semester
Review literature relevant to possible thesis topics	By mid-semester

Spring of Year 1

Typical Courses: I/O

PSY 600 (one unit)
 PSY 670B
 PSY 721 (or 722)
 PSY 675
 PSY 797 (lab research)

Typical Courses: Program Evaluation

PSY 600 (one unit)
 PSY 670B
 PSY 630
 PSY 675 or elective
 PSY 797 (lab research)

Semester goals for both I/O and Program Evaluation emphases:

<u>What</u>	<u>When</u>
File a plan of study (Official Program)	By mid-semester
Decide on topic area/method for thesis project	By mid-semester
Meet with Internship Coordinator to discuss internship goals and to fine-tune resume	Early March
Develop internship opportunities	Beginning mid-March
Participate in annual student progress review	End of April
Write (nearly) formal thesis proposal	End of semester

Summer of Year 1

Summer goals for both I/O and Program Evaluation emphases:

<u>What</u>	<u>When</u>
Begin internship	June
Select other members of thesis committee	By end of summer
Complete thesis proposal	By end of summer
Obtain IRB clearance (save all e-mail correspondence from IRB)	By end of summer

Fall of Year 2

Typical Courses: I/O

PSY 622 (or 621)
PSY 792 (internship)
PSY 798 (lab research)
Elective

Typical Courses: Program Evaluation

PSY 730
PSY 791 (internship)
PSY 798 (lab research)
Elective

Semester goals for both I/O and Program Evaluation emphases:

<u>What</u>	<u>When</u>
Schedule thesis proposal meeting (contact Maureen at least two weeks prior)	Early to mid-semester
Submit internship report and evaluations	Early to mid-semester
Collect and analyze thesis data	Mid to late-semester

Spring of Year 2

Typical Courses: I/O

PSY 722 (or 721)
PSY 630
PSY 798 (lab research)
PSY 799A (thesis)
PSY 792 (internship)

Typical Courses: Program Evaluation

PSY 675 or elective
PSY 798 (lab research)
PSY 799A (thesis)
PSY 791 (internship)
Elective

Semester goals for both I/O and Program Evaluation emphases:

<u>What</u>	<u>When</u>
Print Academic Calendar for relevant Graduate Division deadlines	Prior to beginning of semester
Register for PSY 799A	In first 3 weeks of semester
Apply for graduation	Very beginning of the semester
Write results and discussion sections of thesis	Early to mid-semester
Schedule final thesis oral defense (contact Maureen at least two weeks prior)	Mid to late-semester
Prepare thesis for final processing and submit thesis to Montezuma Publishing	See Academic Calendar

M.S. Internship

An essential component of graduate training in Applied Psychology is an internship experience, which provides students with an opportunity to apply their classroom training in an actual field setting and gain new skills. The Internship Coordinator (Brittany Bermingham, LS-110E, 594-3755, bbermingam@mail.sdsu.edu) works closely with students during the internship experience, initially by assisting with resume preparation and providing contacts in local businesses and human service organizations, and later by conducting follow-up with students and internship sites to assess progress. Parallel to this effort, students work on developing leads for possible internships. After companies have been identified, students work with the Internship Coordinator to take the steps necessary to secure an interview.

There are two criteria to be met for an opportunity to meet the requirements of an internship: 1) it must be related to the student's degree objectives, and 2) the site supervisor needs to be a specialist in organizational development, human resources, industrial/organizational psychology, or organizational behavior. Interns work with other psychologists and practitioners in the field, while working under the direct supervision of an internship site supervisor. Students in both emphases are required to work a minimum of 300 hours in an approved internship site to earn 6 units of credit (usually two 3-unit 791 or 792 courses). The internship is typically completed during the summer months. For more details regarding the internship process refer to the Student Internship Guide.

M.S. Program Post-Graduate Opportunities

Graduates will be prepared to enter rewarding professional careers. Those who choose the Industrial/Organizational emphasis may work for corporations or consulting firms in positions involving the development, delivery, and evaluation of human resources interventions. Examples include personnel selection, training, motivation, job design, quality of work-life interventions, satisfaction/climate surveys or larger-scale organizational change and development efforts. Students who choose Program Development, Implementation, and Evaluation find employment in such settings as health care, education, community-based programs, mental health settings, or government agencies. They perform such functions as: needs assessment, program implementation, program monitoring, feasibility studies, survey design and administration, impact evaluations, formative evaluation and cost benefit analysis. They communicate and use evaluation findings to effect change. These jobs tend to be intellectually exciting, and the rewards include having an impact on people's lives. Students in either emphasis may also choose to pursue doctoral-level training in related areas of psychology after completing their M.S. degree.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE M.A. PROGRAM

Total required units = 30

The following courses are required:

PSY 610	Advanced Research Methods	3 units
PSY 600	Research Orientation	2 units
PSY 670A/B	Advanced Statistics (3 units per semester)	6 units
-OR-		
PSY 770A/B	Advanced Statistics (3 units per semester)	6 units
PSY 797	Research	1 unit
PSY 799A	Thesis	3 units

Three courses from below are required (others from this list may be used as electives)

One of the following two classes (3 units):

PSY 561	Seminar in Neuropsychology
PSY 760	Seminar in Physiological Correlates of Behavior

Two of the following four classes (6 units total):

PSY 587	Advanced Principles of Learning & Cognition
PSY 632	Theories and Methods in Developmental Psychology
PSY 740	Seminar in Social Psychology
PSY 751	Clinical Psychology: Theory and Practice

In addition, two electives are required: 6 units

Three of the PSY 797 Research units you earn for your participation in your research lab can count as one of these electives. Others may be selected from any other 500-700 level Psychology classes or graduate classes from other departments in the University *with the approval of the Graduate Advisor*. See class schedule for current offerings.

You may take additional courses if your schedule permits, but only 30 units of graduate level coursework will appear on your Official Program of Study.

ALL DEFICIENCIES MUST BE ADDRESSED BY THE END OF THE FIRST YEAR IN THE PROGRAM, SO PLEASE PLAN ACCORDINGLY!

SEMESTER GOALS FOR THE M.A. PROGRAM

Fall of Year 1 Goals

What

Take statistics placement exam
Meet with faculty to discuss research opportunities
and thesis topics
Review literature relevant to possible thesis topics
Formulate thesis research question

When

Week before semester starts

By mid-semester
By end of semester
By end of semester

Spring of Year 1 Goals

What

File plan of study (Official Program)
Design thesis project
Write (nearly) formal thesis proposal
Select other members of thesis committee
Participate in annual student progress review

When

By mid-semester
By mid-semester
By end of semester
By end of semester
End of April

Summer of Year 1 Goals

What

Complete thesis proposal
Obtain IRB clearance (save all e-mail correspondence from IRB)

When

By end of summer
By end of summer

Fall of Year 2 Goals

What

Schedule thesis proposal meeting (contact Maureen at least
two weeks prior)
Collect and analyze thesis data

When

Early to mid-semester
Mid to late semester

Spring of Year 2 Goals

What

Print Academic Calendar for relevant Graduate Division deadlines
Register for PSY 799A
Apply for graduation
Write results & discussion sections of thesis
Schedule final thesis oral defense (contact Maureen at least
two weeks prior)
Prepare thesis for final processing and submit to Montezuma
Publishing

When

Prior to beginning of semester
In first 3 weeks of semester
Early semester
Early to mid-semester

Mid to late-semester

See Academic Calendar

Notes Regarding ALL (M.A. and M.S.) Graduate Courses in Psychology

1. Priority for registration in courses is given to students for whom the course is required on their Official Program.
2. Be aware that some courses are only offered in the Fall, some only in the Spring, and some in alternate years.
3. Students may take additional courses that are not part of their Official Program. These courses will appear on students' transcripts. Also be aware that if you are receiving an assistantship through the university (i.e. teaching assistantship), you will need to be enrolled in 6 units of your Official Program. **We urge you to plan ahead, and to get your required courses out of the way before you take your electives.**
4. All graduate students must demonstrate satisfactory performance on the departmental statistics placement exam prior to enrolling in PSY 670A. Before the beginning of the Fall semester, all students will be sent information for review purposes detailing the concepts and statistical content sampled by the exam.
5. Your total hours of course work and assistantship should total no more than 15 per semester. Ten hours of teaching assistantship is equivalent to 3 credit units, so if you have a 20-hour teaching assistantship, you should take no more than 9 units per semester and if you have a 10-hour teaching assistantship, you should take no more than 12 units per semester. However, if you feel you need to take more units, you may petition to do so.
6. Which courses are taken in the first semester depends on which courses are offered, any deficiencies the student may have, assistantship limitations, and fulfillment of necessary prerequisites for the courses.
7. Typically, during your first semester, you will enroll in PSY 600 (2 credits), PSY 670A or 770A (3 credits), PSY 797 (research; 1-3 credits), and then another graduate seminar and/or any undergraduate deficiencies you may have.
8. Grade point average of at least 3.0 must be maintained in all courses listed on the official degree program, and in all courses, 300-level and above, taken at SDSU concurrently with or subsequent to graduate admissions. If an individual's grade point average is below 3.0, they are at risk of losing their teaching assistantship. A grade point average of at least 2.85 must be maintained in all courses on the graduate record in order to graduate.

Thesis (M.A. and M.S.)

All Master's students are required to complete and present a thesis, involving the design of an original empirical study, data collection, analysis, and a write-up of the study hypotheses and findings. The thesis must fulfill the requirements of the Graduate School, described in the Graduate Bulletin. Students work closely with a Thesis Committee Chair to develop an original empirical project, which is evaluated and approved by a committee chosen by the student and his/her advisor. Students work independently during all aspects of the thesis, including design, data collection, analysis, and write-up. A final report is written by the student, approved by the Thesis Committee, and submitted to the Graduate School for credit towards the Master's degree.

In Pursuit of the Master's Degree

Official Program

The first official step on the road to the Master's degree is to file an Official Program of Study (POS), which is a contract between the student and the University indicating which classes the student will take to complete the requirements for his/her master's degree. Some time during the Fall semester, the Graduate Advisor makes a presentation to the Research Orientation class (PSY 600) regarding the completion of the Official Program of Study and addresses questions students may have. Students can also call the Department of Psychology office (LS 110, 594-5359) and make an appointment with the Graduate Advisor to get additional information and obtain forms. After completing the Official Program of Study form, the student should meet with his/her mentor to review the POS and obtain the mentor's signature on the form. Then an appointment can be made with the Graduate Advisor to officially submit the POS on-line. This process typically occurs during spring semester of the first year.

The most common reasons for rejection of the Official Program are more than thirty units listed and failure to include all the "catalog requirements." Catalog requirements are courses which are listed as required in the annual SDSU Graduate Bulletin. Subsequent changes to the Official Program can be made using the "Request for a Change in Program for the Master's Degree" form available in the department office; however, courses that have been included in the program of study and have already been completed can not be removed. This form must first be approved by the Graduate Advisor and then by the Graduate Division. Note that while it is easy to change the Official Program, it is exceedingly difficult to change a catalog requirement listed in the Graduate Bulletin. The change form, "Petition for Adjustment of Academic Requirements," is also available in the Department of Psychology office and must be approved and recommended by the Graduate Advisor and then signed by the Assistant Dean of the Graduate Division. The Official Program should be submitted by the end of the first year in the program. Students holding department assistantships will not have their assistantships renewed unless their Official Programs have been turned in.

Advancement to Candidacy

When 12 units or more in courses on the Official Program have been completed with an average GPA of B (3.0) or better, and any undergraduate deficiencies have been remedied, students are eligible for Advancement to Candidacy for the Master's Degree. To be recommended for Advancement to Candidacy, students need to select a Thesis Committee, develop a thesis proposal (see Appendix A), and defend the proposal. Students often do background work on developing a thesis topic prior to being formally eligible for candidacy. However, there are strict guidelines regulating the nature and extent of such pilot work (see Appendix B). These can be found in the most recent version of the official thesis preparation manual, San Diego State University Master's Theses and Project Manual, as introduced in PSY 600. It contains detailed information about who may chair or serve on thesis committees, manuscript preparation, etc.

Thesis Proposal

After selecting a Thesis Committee Chair and Committee, a thesis proposal is needed that outlines the planned research project. The thesis proposal should consist of a description of the study's hypotheses, objectives, design, methods for data collection, planned statistical analyses, and implications of potential outcomes. It must be written in the current APA-approved style (see Appendix A for more details). It is the student's responsibility to reserve a room and schedule the proposal meeting at a time when the entire Thesis Committee can attend. The proposal should be distributed to the Thesis Committee members at least one week prior to the proposal meeting. Advance planning is imperative!

Many students apply for clearance from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (or IACUC for animal research) before the proposal meeting, and then submit amendments (if needed) after the proposal meeting. Another option is to apply for IRB approval after the proposal meeting. Advancement to candidacy cannot occur until IRB or IACUC paperwork has been submitted. Students should seek the input of their thesis chair when deciding which option would be best. In either case, collection of the thesis data **can not** begin until IRB or IACUC approval has been obtained. Students who are using data from a research project that has already been approved by IRB/IACUC still must submit a modification to that IRB describing how the data will be used for their thesis project.

Proposal Meeting

After the proposal has been thoroughly critiqued and approved by the Thesis Committee Chair, it can be submitted, with an Abstract page written according to APA publication guidelines (see Appendix B), to the Graduate Administrative Coordinator for approval by the Graduate Advisor. NOTE: The Thesis Committee Chair must approve the Abstract before it can be submitted. Students should also submit an electronic copy of the abstract to the Graduate Administrative Coordinator. The proposal is kept on file in the Department of Psychology office while the Abstract and the time, date, and room number for the proposal meeting are distributed to all full-time department faculty members for comments and reactions. Notification of the proposal meeting must be sent out to faculty at least 7 days prior to the meeting, which means that **the abstract must be sent to the Graduate Administrative Coordinator at least 10 business days prior to your proposal meeting.** The purpose of this procedure is to give the faculty an opportunity to provide feedback to the student prior to conducting the study so that the thesis proper may benefit from the input. Faculty are encouraged to transmit their comments to the Thesis Committee Chair and to attend the proposal meeting. Faculty and graduate students are invited to attend the proposal meeting.

Students should obtain "Instructions for Department Processing of your Thesis Proposal" form from the Psychology Department office. Page 1 must accompany your proposal and Abstract when you submit them to the Graduate Advisor; Page 2 (fully signed) must be submitted following the proposal meeting. If no major problems are brought to the attention of the Graduate Advisor within five working days following the proposal meeting, and all other conditions for Advancement to Candidacy are met, then thesis research may proceed. In the rare event that major difficulties arise, informal resolution is attempted. Failing this, the matter is presented to the department Graduate Committee.

Recommendation for Advancement

To Advance to Candidacy for the Master's Degree, a B (3.0) average in all courses on the Official Program is required. In addition, any undergraduate deficiencies and/or classified student admission conditions must have been completed satisfactorily. A signed thesis proposal approved by the Department and filed in the department office is also required.

After determining that all requirements have been met, the Graduate Advisor signs the Advancement to Candidacy form, which is submitted to the Graduate Division. This form notifies the Graduate Division that the student has met Department of Psychology requirements and has been Advanced to Candidacy. In addition, the official Appointment of Thesis/Project Committee Signature Form from the Graduate Division must be signed by all Thesis Committee members and the Graduate Advisor, and filed with the Graduate Division. After this has been done, the student is eligible to enroll for three units of master's thesis research (799A). The schedule number for 799A may be obtained from the Graduate Division once the Thesis/Project Committee Signature Form has been approved. Note that enrollment in 799A or 799B (thesis research extension) is considered a full course load for veteran's benefits, Navy Contract employment, and student financial aid. A letter to this effect can be obtained from the Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Division and Research. **Collection or accessing of thesis data can begin only after the thesis proposal has been**

approved in writing by the Thesis Committee and the Graduate Adviser, and IRB approval has been obtained. Pilot data can be collected beforehand (with appropriate IRB or IACUC approval) and may be described in the report. The student must be registered for at least one class at SDSU in order to begin collecting thesis data.

Final Thesis Oral Exam (Thesis Defense)

The Thesis Chair is to be consulted throughout the data collection, analysis, and write-up of the thesis. Upon approval by the Thesis Chair, the thesis must be distributed to each member of the Thesis Committee, ideally at least two weeks in advance of the final oral exam. When all members agree that the thesis is ready for the final oral exam, it is the student's responsibility to:

1. Consult the Department of Psychology office to schedule a room and time for the exam when all committee members can attend. See the instructions in Appendix B regarding time and place for the exam and composition and circulation of the Abstract.
2. If needed, arrange for a laptop computer and projector with the Department of Psychology office.
3. Successfully defend the thesis, and make changes as suggested by the Thesis Committee. Obtain approval of Thesis Committee Chair for final version of thesis document.

Thesis Submission

Next the thesis needs to be typed and formatted in just-about-final form. It is suggested that this be done by a professional familiar with SDSU psychology thesis format so as to avoid problems with the Thesis Review Service. Both the Thesis Review Service and Department of Psychology maintain files with formatters' names and phone numbers. For those who choose not to retain a professional for this service it is recommended that the student consult the *San Diego State University Master's Theses and Projects Manual* for reference.

Visit the Dissertation/Thesis Review web site. Log on to www.sdsu.edu and follow these links: click on Departments, Graduate and Research Affairs, Graduate Division, and Thesis Review. The site contains information on deadlines, policies, and procedures for preparing and submitting theses. You will also find a checklist of required components for all theses. Students who cannot prepare their theses will find a list of professional formatters to contact.

After the final draft is typed it must be resubmitted to all Thesis Committee members for their signatures in black ink on an official Signature Page which you have prepared. The signatures indicate final approval of the thesis. The model for the official Signature Page can be found in Chapter 5 of the *SDSU Master's Thesis and Project Manual*. Before submission of the final draft to Thesis Review Service, the entire thesis manuscript, the Abstract/Title page, and a photocopy of the Title and Signature pages need to go to the Graduate Division and Research. They will issue a Thesis Clearance Sheet approving the almost-final copy. Then the pages and manuscript can be taken to the Thesis Review Service.

Critical Deadlines

Graduation is not automatic upon filing the thesis. There are deadlines and costs. Students need to obtain an application for graduation from the Graduate Division office, submit it to the cashier's office and pay the required fee. **You must apply for graduation early in the semester in which you plan to graduate, and you must be registered in 799 (A or B) in the semester in which you plan to graduate. Check the current Graduate Bulletin for deadlines.** If for some reason graduation in May is not possible, it is necessary to re-apply (and pay an additional fee) for August or whatever subsequent semester in which graduation is expected.

The Thesis Review Service has a late April “without risk” deadline (see the Graduate Bulletin for current deadline data) for submission of the final draft for May graduation. That means they will critique it and return it to the student for any corrections in time for it to be submitted to Thesis Processing (Montezuma Publishing) by their late May deadline (see the Graduate Bulletin for current deadline data). Montezuma Publishing will see that it is printed, bound, and shelved in the library. The Thesis Chair and members of the Thesis Committee also appreciate receiving a bound copy of the thesis.

If the thesis is submitted to the Thesis Review Service between late April and late May, this is the “at risk” period and the critiquing/printing procedures may not be done in time for May graduation. However, as long as the thesis has gone to the Thesis Review Service, the Graduate Division considers it complete, and it will not be necessary to re-enroll in the subsequent semester. However, graduation may not occur until the following August.

A two-page summary of the procedures necessary to earn a master’s degree is available in the Graduate Division and Research office. The deadlines for filing for graduation, and for filing the thesis manuscript change each semester. The dates are published in each semester's class schedule and the Graduate Bulletin. Note that there is a seven-year rule. Students have seven years from the date of their first course on their Official Program to complete all the requirements for the M.A. degree.

Walking at Graduation

Most students enjoy the experience of closure they get from “walking” through the graduation ceremonies, being hooded by their thesis chair at the psychology ceremony, and being lauded by their family and friends. In order to qualify to “walk” (either at the college or department ceremony), an almost final copy of the thesis (even if it has not yet been defended) must have been submitted to the Thesis Chair. The determination of what constitutes “almost final” is made by the Graduate Advisor. It is the responsibility of the student to rent or otherwise obtain the formal cap, gown, and hood, which make up the graduation regalia. Representatives of companies that rent these items usually set up shop in the bookstore during spring semester. Be sure to ask your Thesis Chair well in advance of graduation whether s/he plans to attend the ceremonies, and whether s/he would be willing to hood you. If your Thesis Chair is not available for the hooding, you should ask a favorite professor to do so.

Summary of Student Responsibilities

It is the student's responsibility to take care of the following:

- A. Read the SDSU Graduate Bulletin for any graduate student requirements.
- B. Make sure all transcripts are in and the GRE score is on file.
- C. Notify the Department as well as Admissions and Records of any changes in name, address, e-mail or phone number.
- D. Keep overall GPA at 3.0 or above.
- E. Fulfill course requirements for specialization (M.A. or M.S.).
- F. Obtain approval for transfer units from other schools/departments.
- G. File the paperwork for your Official Program and obtain approval to change it, if necessary. The Official Program must be typed, signed by both the student and their faculty mentor, and submitted to the Graduate Advisor for approval by the end of your second semester in the program.
- H. Select a Thesis Committee Chair and a Thesis Committee, and do the paperwork involved.
- I. File the paperwork and obtain approval from IRB (Institutional Review Board) before collecting data for your thesis.
- J. Successfully defend your proposal, and conduct your thesis research.
- K. Write up your thesis in appropriate form, and successfully defend it.
- L. Know the required steps and forms to be completed for the thesis.
- M. Obtain forms and signatures for all steps of the thesis.
- N. File for graduation early in the semester in which you plan to graduate.
- O. Provide SDSU's main library with a copy of the final thesis.

Pearls of Wisdom from Students Who have Been There

"The expectations for graduate students are different from undergraduates. No one is going to hold your hand and tell you what to do every step of the way. Be prepared to be independent and to take the initiative for all aspects of your education. This includes getting to know professors, finding a thesis topic, making friends, and unearthing answers to administrative questions."

"I thought I knew everything about performing research in the library. In reality, I was completely ignorant. It wasn't until my last year that I discovered all sorts of resources that could have saved me weeks of work. I would advise new students to talk to the librarians about their papers and research projects. Librarians are paid the big bucks for a reason."

"A big mistake I made was to wait until my last semester to start thinking of a thesis topic. I know of some students who knew what thesis topic they were interested in and wrote a paper on the same topic throughout all of their courses. They were really ahead of the game when they sat down to write their final thesis. Other students were a lot more on the ball and actively searched for topics by talking to professors or asking questions in their classes. If I could do it all over again, in each class I would have asked myself the question 'Does this interest me? Could I write a thesis on this subject?'"

"The bureaucracy at SDSU is thicker than cement! There's a form for absolutely everything and the policies (and the forms) are always changing. My advice is to be prepared. Read absolutely everything in the catalog and make sure you understand what you need to do. Asking several sources (the department and the Graduate Division, for example) also helps to get a broader picture of the requirements. Turn in the paperwork as early as possible, in case there are problems (and usually there is at least one box you'll forget to fill in). Another piece of advice is to maintain a Zen-like attitude. Eventually someone will give you the wrong form, the wrong information, or forget to tell you that you needed to fill out Form A before you can turn in Form B. It doesn't help to get upset about it because you'll still have to jump through those hoops whether you want to or not. Throwing a tantrum only makes the person less helpful and raises your own blood pressure."

The following was written by a master's student in the entering class of 2002:

"Why Your Thesis is the Ideal Boyfriend..."

It is always there for you.

It listens and reflects what you have said.

It can provide a great sense of accomplishment.

Standing by its side makes you feel intelligent.

It can be on your mind without consuming your every bit of attention.

It works around your schedule.

It will never take advantage of you.

You will never have to worry about jealousy or apologizing.

You will feel the immediate reward for the time you invest in it.

It will be at your command, your every beck and call.

It will appreciate your unique ambitions, talents, and insights.

It will never roll its eyes at you or comment in any derogatory manner.

It has no preference as to your shape and size.

It will never look to be just friends, but will always desire an intimate relationship.

Once you have established a good working relationship it will reciprocate your every expression of love.

It will laugh with you not at you.

It will hang on your every last word and will always provide more than a one word answer.

But, most importantly, it will never lead you on or forget to call, and if you have questions, it has the answers.

Good luck to all those working through or taking on the novel endeavor of a thesis. Hopefully, this short piece will encourage you to greet this challenge with smiles and a hearty laugh.

Fellow Student,
Tory Weber

Contact Information

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Other Resources

Admissions and Records	594-6871
Campus Information.....	594-6551
Department of Psychology Master's Program	594-5346
Disabled Student Services	594-6473
Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology	594-2246
Employment	
SDSU Job Tapes	594-6404
Career Services	594-6851
Financial Aid	594-6323
Graduate Division.....	594-5213
Housing Information	594-5742
International Student Center.....	594-1982
Psychology Undergraduate Advising	594-5412
Student Financial Services	594-6422
Student Outreach Services.....	594-6336
Test Office.....	594-5216
Transcripts (SDSU work only).....	594-6871
Veterans Affairs	594-5813

Psychology Club and Psi Chi at SDSU

Location: LS-114

Phone: (619) 594-5418

Website: <http://sdsupsichi.weebly.com/index.html>

Applied Psychology Student Association Newsletters

http://www.psychology.sdsu.edu/APSA_Newsletter.htm

M.A./M.S. Checklist

1. Select a Thesis Topic, Thesis Chair & Thesis Committee
2. Write proposal
3. Send proposal to IRB and get written approval for research
4. Obtain “ Instructions for Department Processing of Your Thesis Proposal” form from Department office, fill out and submit to Graduate Advisor
5. Submit proposal and abstract to Graduate Administrative Coordinator
6. Successfully defend proposal at proposal meeting
7. Have thesis proposal signature page (obtained from Department) signed and submit with proposal to Graduate Advisor, who will file for Advancement to Candidacy
8. Once notified of advancement, get Thesis Committee Signature form from Graduate Division, obtain necessary signatures, & return with IRB written approval to Graduate Division
9. Get schedule number from Graduate Division, and register for 799A, if date permits
10. Begin data collection.
11. Apply for graduation, and/or register for 799B
12. Finish thesis research and writing
13. Arrange with Department for thesis defense date, time, and place
14. Defend thesis in oral presentation meeting
15. When all changes requested after defense have been made, obtain committee signatures on official signature page you have typed
16. Submit correctly typed and formatted thesis, copy of signature page and copy of title page to Graduate Division, and get Thesis Clearance Sheet.
17. Take Clearance Sheet, signature pages, and manuscript to Thesis Review Service

Appendix A

Guidelines for Creating and Completing the Master's Thesis

I. Selecting a Topic

1. How? The following are some methods for narrowing your choices:
 - a. What area interests you?
 - b. What sort of research is currently being conducted in the Department? See the listing of faculty research interests available in this Handbook and/or on-line.
 - c. What topic is currently exciting the field?
 - d. What faculty project can you attach yourself to?
2. Survey the relevant literature in Psychological Abstracts by looking up key words. Often a computer search via Psych Lit in Love Library is very useful. Read articles in the current issues of the journals, which show up most frequently in your search. Even the latest issues of abstracts or the most recent computer databases cannot include current articles. Besides, browsing in these journals can give you new ideas.
3. Attend department colloquia and talks, conferences and professional meetings to hear about new ideas and to stimulate your own thinking
4. Evaluate your personal timetable for completing the thesis in view of your obligations, work habits, scope of the project, which interests you--then add four months.
5. Seek out faculty in your chosen interest area(s). To do so, look in the Psychological Abstracts for their prior publications, Love Library for theses they have directed, and the Department of Psychology web pages listing faculty research interests. Above all, ask fellow students who may know the person.

II. Selecting a Chair and Committee

1. Make an appointment to talk with your prospective Thesis Chair or Chairs. Describe your ideas, ask about their research interests, what kinds of theses other students have done with them and if they think you might fit into their lab (if they have one). While you may want to express interest in what a faculty member is doing, be sure you do not imply that you plan to work with him or her until you are confident that that is indeed the case. There seem to be two major faculty styles for directing thesis research. One group of faculty tend to be rather non-directive, and encourage students to develop their own thesis topic. While this stimulates originality it may take a long time and be frustrating. Other faculty members require that thesis students carry out some project that is of interest to the faculty member, perhaps a component in a larger thematic research program. While this is expedient and convenient, it may be unexciting to you. Above all, you want a Chair who is readily available in the day-to-day conduct of research, one whose students complete their theses with dispatch, and who may furnish a strong recommendation. You will be happier if your needs and your advisor's are congruent.
2. Description of the Thesis Committee and who is eligible to serve on it is detailed in Appendix C of the official "SDSU Master's Theses and Project Manual." Final authority for approval of committee members rests with the Dean of the Graduate Division and Research.

III. Thesis Proposal - General Considerations

The aim of the proposal is to spell out clearly what you propose to do for your thesis research study and why, so that you and your committee can discuss the details and arrive at definite decisions and agreement. Proposals are written in the future tense ("will") rather than the past tense ("was"). Otherwise write the proposal in journal article format, following the style of the current APA Publication Manual. If there are some details or procedures you are uncertain about, include a discussion of the various ways you might proceed, indicating the pros and cons of each possible way.

Introduction Describe the general purpose of the study. Describe the history of the topic, prior research findings and why it is of interest. What are the major theoretical issues generating this line of work? What do you plan to do to extend the research? What is the significance of your proposed research to the field of psychology and the world at large? What is your hypothesis? Include anything else the reader needs to know to understand why the study is being done. Don't include information that does not help to clarify the purpose of the study, the method, or the potential results.

Method and Procedure Describe exactly how you plan to do the project in as much detail as is currently practical. Include type and number of subjects, experimental design, materials and apparatus, details of procedure and anything else appropriate to how your particular experiment is to be done. Include a draft of any questionnaires or other such materials to be used as well as the formal feedback to be given to human subjects. If uncertain about exactly how you think some particular problem should be handled, include a discussion of the pros and cons of the various alternatives.

Results How will you score the data, and what statistical tests will you use? Which comparisons will be of particular interest?

Discussion How might the study turn out? What would it mean if it turned out as expected? What would each of the other ways it could turn out tell you? In what way could it make an important contribution to knowledge? What are the theoretical implications of the findings for each of the potential outcomes?

References Include here the bibliography of works that are cited in your paper, following APA citation style.

Abstract The Abstract is read first and may be the only part of your work that our department faculty as a whole may see, so make sure the project is well described. It is a brief comprehensive summary of the project in 500 words or less. State the problem, in one sentence if possible. Describe the subjects, specifying such pertinent characteristics as number, gender, species, etc. Next describe the experimental procedure including the apparatus, data-gathering procedures, complete test names or generic names and the dosage of any drugs. Then describe the statistical tests to be used, the interpretation of the various possible outcomes, and the implications. Do not include source documentation. You will find it very difficult at first to condense your magnum opus in this manner. However, it is good practice, because submissions to most professional meetings and journals require such brief abstracts. In addition, it will help you to emphasize and clarify those basic elements that are at the core of your research.

Appendix B

Master's Thesis Regulations

Below are regulations pertaining to the master's thesis, which have been adopted by the Department of Psychology faculty. They went into effect at the start of the Spring 1990 semester, and supercede previous requirements if there is any conflict.

I. Master's Thesis Overview

1. A master's thesis is an essential component of the requirement for the master's degree. It is the policy of the Department of Psychology that all theses be empirical studies. The purpose of the thesis is to demonstrate the student's ability to carry out a scientifically valid research project. The skills required include:
 - a. familiarity with previously published scientific literature on the problem
 - b. formulation of a hypothesis
 - c. specification of appropriate procedures and a research design
 - d. collecting or accessing of relevant data
 - e. appropriate data analyses
 - f. appropriate interpretation of the results and conclusions and implications of the findings
 - g. effective written communication of this information in APA style
 - h. satisfactory oral defense of the work

Collection or accessing of thesis data can begin only after the thesis proposal has been approved in writing by the Thesis Committee and Department of Psychology faculty. Pilot data can be collected beforehand and may be described in the report, but are not to be added to or blended with the formal thesis data.

2. The Thesis Chair and Committee will ensure that:
 - a. the student is significantly involved in the development of hypotheses and the study's design and testable predictions.
 - b. the student identifies the appropriate parameters, collects or accesses firsthand the study database, and conducts the necessary statistical analyses.
 - c. when an existing database is used, the student independently identifies the dependent/independent variables and sample criteria before collecting the necessary sample data from the larger database.
 - d. research designs that do not involve the manipulation of independent variables maintain the same level of scientific rigor as those using experimental designs. The variables under study must be operationally defined and the data must be collected systematically using a method of sampling appropriate to scientific psychological research.
3. A professor can chair or co-chair no more than five active theses simultaneously. Exceptions can be provided by the approval of the Graduate Committee.
4. The Graduate Advisor, the Department Chair and the Thesis Chair and Committee shall ensure that master's theses comply with the department policies.

II. Thesis Proposal

In addition to other requirements for Advancement to Candidacy for the M.A. or M.S. degree, the student must present a thesis proposal to the department faculty outlining the research project. The thesis proposal

will contain a description of the study's hypotheses, objectives, design, methods for data collection, planned statistical analyses, and implications of potential outcomes. It must be written in the current APA-approved style. It is the Thesis Chair's responsibility to make sure that all members of the Thesis Committee are familiar with the proposal. After the Thesis Chair has approved the proposal, the student will send the Graduate Administrative Coordinator a copy of the proposal and an abstract (APA style) along with information about the title of the proposal, the time and date of the meeting, and the three committee members' names. The Department of Psychology office staff (LS-110) will send the abstract to all department faculty and post it on the Graduate Student Bulletin Board. Because the abstract will also announce the date, room, and time for the proposal meeting, you must first consult with your Thesis Chair to make sure the time, date, and place are convenient. Because the thesis proposal announcement must go out seven calendar days before the meeting date, it is imperative that the abstract be turned into the department office *at least ten days* before the meeting date. In addition, an electronic copy of the proposal should be e-mailed to the Graduate Administrative Coordinator *at least seven days* before the meeting date. The purpose of the proposal meeting is to get helpful input from knowledgeable faculty before the experiment is begun. Faculty members are encouraged to transmit their comments to the Thesis Chair and may also attend the proposal meeting. In the rare event that major problems arise, we try to resolve them informally. Failing this, the problem is presented to the department Master's Committee before the Graduate Advisor acts on the student's Advancement to Candidacy. After the proposal meeting, the Thesis Chair should contact the Graduate Advisor and let her/him know that all went well. If all other conditions have been met, the Graduate Advisor will then promptly recommend to the Graduate Division that the student be officially Advanced to Candidacy.

III. Final Thesis Oral Defense

1. Notice of final thesis oral defense is to be distributed to each faculty unit employee at least five working days in advance of the scheduled time.
2. Notice is to contain the title of the thesis and an abstract.
3. The oral defense is to be scheduled on campus at reasonable times during regular working hours.
4. The thesis is not to be signed by the committee prior to the oral defense.
5. All Thesis Committee members must be present for the oral defense. If any member is on leave and unavailable, a substitute must be selected by the Chair and the candidate subject to approval by the Graduate Division and Research.
6. Waiver of the oral defense will be granted only in rare cases of extreme hardship and only with the approval of the Master's Committee.
7. Passage of the oral defense is determined by unanimous vote of the Thesis Committee.
8. It is the responsibility of the Thesis Committee to make efforts to encourage other department members to attend the oral defense.