



Psychological and Brain Sciences Ph.D. Program Handbook

Welcome

The Psychological and Brain Sciences Ph.D. Program faculty is dedicated to students' successful progression and completion of the program. This handbook is an important reference for all new and current students as they navigate through the program.

Mission Statement

The UNLV Psychological and Brain Sciences doctoral program trains students to become psychological scientists capable of conducting independent research that meets international standards of scientific excellence. Upon completing the degree, students will be qualified to seek careers conducting research in academia and other institutional and applied settings. Areas of research in which faculty supervise students include: cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, and quantitative, social, and community psychology. The program operates on a mentor model in which students work under the supervision of an identified faculty mentor. We welcome students from diverse backgrounds and encourage research in topics related to multiculturalism and diversity.

Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide program specific information that is not found in the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#). Students are responsible for understanding and following the policies and procedures delineated in this document and the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#), as well as the NSHE Code, UNLV Bylaws, and the UNLV Student Conduct Code. Questions about policies should be directed to the Graduate College: gradassociatedean@unlv.edu.

Department Graduate Faculty

A current listing of the graduate faculty can be found in the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#). Faculty must hold graduate faculty status to be involved in graduate education at UNLV. For up to date information regarding graduate faculty status in your department, visit the [Graduate Faculty status web page](#).

Program Information

[Psychological and Brain Sciences Ph.D. Program Areas of Study](#)
[Cognitive, Developmental, Quantitative, Social, and Community](#)

Contact Information

[Ph.D. Psychological and Brain Sciences](#)

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Program Requirements

Program requirements regarding [admission, coursework and culminating experience](#) are found in the [graduate catalog](#).

For students in the Quantitative, Social, and Community emphasis track, students should use their elective credits to specialize in some area of quantitative, social, or community psychology. Students will construct their course structures in collaboration with their mentors. Potential areas of specialization include, but are not limited to, Psychometrics, Applied Data Analyst, Quantitative Programmer, Evolutionary Psychology, Social Inequities, or Community-Based Participatory and Action Research. **Potential course plans*** for these areas of specialization are shown below.

* **Official program requirements are found in the [graduate catalog](#).**

Psychometrics

The Psychometrics specialization teaches students how to design and evaluate measures in the social sciences and educational fields. Both quantitative and qualitative methods may be used.

Complete 18 credits in courses such as:

PSY 712: Psychometrics

PSY 710: Multivariate Statistics or EPY 733: Multivariate Statistics or STA 715:

Multivariate Statistical Models

PSY 683: Theories of Personality

EPY 723: Theory and Practice of Human Measurement I

EPY 724: Theory and Practice of Human Measurement II

EPY 725: Item Response Theory and Applications

EPY 732: Multiple Regression and Path Analysis

EPY 734: Latent Variable Models: Factor Analysis and SEM

EPY 718: Qualitative Research Methodology or NURS 781: Qualitative Research

Methods in Nursing or SOC 705: Qualitative Research

Applied Data Analyst

The Applied Data Analyst specialization teaches students a wide variety of data analyses methods. This specialization prepares students to analyze data for a variety of research projects, perhaps as a statistician dedicated to a handful of research projects or perhaps as a statistical consultant working with a large number of short-term clients.

Complete 18 credits in courses such as:

PSY 710: Multivariate Statistics or EPY 733: Multivariate Statistics or STA 715:

Multivariate Statistical Models

EPY 732: Multiple Regression and Path Analysis

EPY 734: Latent Variable Models: Factor Analysis and SEM

EPY 718: Qualitative Research Methodology or NURS 781: Qualitative Research

Methods in Nursing or SOC 705: Qualitative Research

STA 761: Regression Analysis I

STA 762: Regression Analysis II

EAB 753: Nonparametric Methods for the Health Sciences or EPY 745:

Categorical/Nonparametric Data Analysis or STA 695: Nonparametric Methods

STA 753: Bayesian Data Analysis

STA 793: Techniques of Statistical Consulting

Quantitative Programmer

The Quantitative Programmer specialization teaches students how to program models and simulations. Such programs can be used to evaluate the performance of new inferential statistics or to model phenomenon in substantive content areas.

Complete 18 credits in courses such as:

CS 617: Introduction to Computer Simulation

CS 717: Advanced Computer Simulation

MAT 663: Advanced Matrix Theory and Applications

PSY 710: Multivariate Statistics or EPY 733: Multivariate Statistics or STA 715:

Multivariate Statistical Models

EPY 734: Latent Variable Models: Factor Analysis and SEM

EPY 732: Multiple Regression and Path Analysis

EAB 753: Nonparametric Methods for the Health Sciences or EPY 745:

Categorical/Nonparametric Data Analysis or STA 695: Nonparametric Methods
STA 753: Bayesian Data Analysis
STA 761: Regression Analysis I
STA 762: Regression Analysis II

Evolutionary Psychology

The Evolutionary Psychology specialization examines evolutionary accounts of thought, emotion, and behavior. Major emphasis is on evolutionary explanations of the cognitive and emotional underpinnings of human social behavior.

Complete 18 credits in courses such as:

PSY 743: Human Sexuality
ANTH 671: Evolution of Human Sexuality
ANTH 669: Evolution and Biology of Human Behavior
ANTH 660: Primate Evolution
ANTH 675: Evolutionary Medicine
PSY 766: Independent Study
PSY 768: Independent Research

Psychology of Social Inequities

The Psychology of Social Inequities specialization examines the social impact and mechanisms of privilege, oppression, and institutionalized discrimination on marginalized people. Major emphasis is on the psychological consequences of unjust and avoidable social inequalities and disparities.

Complete 18 credits in courses such as:

PSY 743: Human Sexuality
PSY 750: Diversity in Professional Psychology
PSY 763: Survey of Community Mental Health Resources
SOC 641: Social Inequality
SOC 753: Racial Justice and Latina/Os
SOC 770 / SOC 671: Race & Ethnic Relationships
SOC 755: Social Movements and Social Change
SOC 769: Ecology, Culture, Social Psychology
SW 707: Contemporary Issues in Diversity
HED 761: Race and Ethnic Disparities in Health

Community-Based Participatory and Action Research

The Community-Based Participatory and Action Research specialization prepares graduate students for a career in research and scholarly work that values and promotes active community participation, civic engagement, and the meaningful involvement of individuals from marginalized and underserved communities with perspectives and lived experiences relevant to a common-ground research agenda. Community-Based Participatory and Action Research values diversity, inclusion, equity, social justice, shared responsibility, and shared ownership of knowledge generated from academic/community-stakeholder partnerships. It uses qualitative and quantitative research methods to examine the impacts of social and health disparities on the mental health and wellbeing of racial and ethnic minorities, sexual and gender minorities, immigrants and newcomers, older persons, and other underrepresented populations.

Complete 18 credits in courses such as:

PSY 710: Multivariate Statistics or EPY 733: Multivariate Statistics or STA 715: Multivariate Statistical Models
PSY 750: Diversity in Professional Psychology
SOC 641: Social Inequality
SW 707: Contemporary Issues in Diversity
EPY 718: Qualitative Research Methodology or SOC 705: Qualitative Research
EPY 719: Advanced Qualitative Research
EOH 715 or HED 716: Qualitative and Field Methods for Public Health
EOH 744: Mixed Methods Research for Public Health
HED 761: Race and Ethnic Disparities in Health
HED 791: Community-Based Participatory Research Methods

The Psychological and Brain Sciences Doctoral Program is designed as a four to six-year program. See Sample Program Timeline. It is important to note that time to degree guidelines are outlined in the Graduate College policy (Please see [Catalog](#)). Students in the Psychological and Brain Sciences Doctoral Program must complete all the requirements for the master's degree in six years and the doctoral degree within eight years or face separation from the program.

Mentor Model

The Psychological and Brain Sciences Program operates on a mentor model. The mentor serves as a guide and academic advisor to the student's graduate study, as a research supervisor, as a supervisor of the student's professional development, and as a professional role model. Students are expected to participate in their mentor's research group and may participate in other faculty research groups when they have overlapping interests. The mentor should be the first person contacted to answer questions about the program and professional issues. Students may switch mentors with the consent of the new mentor and the Psychological and Brain Sciences Program Director. If another faculty member agrees to mentor the student, the student must submit an Appointment of Faculty Advisor form via Grad Rebel Gateway.

Advisory Committee Guidelines

Selection of Thesis and Dissertation Committees

The student selects a four-person committee in consultation with the mentor. The committee consists of the mentor and three additional graduate faculty members, one who is not from the Department of Psychology and serves as the Graduate College Representative. Completion of the Appointment of Advisory Committee Approval form through the Grad Rebel Gateway occurs when all committee members are selected.

Selection of Qualifying Activity Committee

The student selects a three-person committee in consultation with the mentor. The committee consists of the mentor and two additional graduate faculty members.

Degree Program Benchmarks

Master's Thesis

The purpose of the master's project is to involve first and second year students in all phases of the design, execution, analysis, interpretation, and communication of research.

Proposal Development

Proposal development typically occurs throughout the first year. The topic is developed with the mentor and in consultation with committee members (as needed), proposal drafts are written and revised (and revised again), and pilot data are collected (as necessary). The introduction and method sections should be written at a length and format appropriate for submission to a journal in the student's area of study. It should also include proposed data analyses and potential implications of the study findings. The final proposal draft should be submitted to committee members at least two weeks prior to the scheduled master's proposal meeting.

Master's Thesis Proposal Meeting

During the master's thesis proposal meeting, committee members ask questions and give feedback regarding the design of the master's project. Normally, the student provides a brief overview of the introduction section and more detailed presentations of the hypothesis and research design. The student should be able to answer questions and clarify design issues. Following questions, the student is asked to leave the room and the committee decides whether the student passes or fails the proposal meeting. Following committee deliberations, the student is then invited back to the meeting and is informed of the committee's decisions. In the case of failure, the student is placed on probation via the Grad College process and required to schedule a second proposal meeting after addressing the issues that resulted in failure.

When the student passes, use Grad Rebel Gateway to fill out the approval forms and electronically send it to committee members and the graduate program coordinator for signature. Only after successfully defending the proposal may the student enroll in thesis credits. The Graduate College requires that students complete 6 thesis credits and that students be enrolled in at least 3 graduate credits during the semester the oral thesis defense is conducted and the student intends to graduate (the graduate credits do not need to be thesis credits if all 6 have been completed). Please see [Graduate Catalog](#) for more information.

Master's Thesis Defense Meeting

A student's advisor is expected to have approved the draft of the thesis prior to it being distributed to other committee members. All sections of the paper should be written at a length and format appropriate for submission to a journal in the student's area of study. Students are expected to give the approved draft of the thesis to committee members at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense. The scheduled defense could be postponed if one or more committee members judge the draft to be subpar. Committee members are encouraged to notify the committee chair in this regard. Additionally, two weeks prior to the defense meeting, the student provides a copy of the final draft of the thesis along with the date and time of the defense meeting to the Psychology Department front office.

The defense meeting is a formal presentation of the major research questions, results, and interpretations of the thesis. The oral presentation is open to UNLV Graduate Faculty, graduate students, relevant administrators, and invited guests. The advisory committee chair must approve any invited guests prior to the defense. The oral presentation may be followed by general questions of clarification from attendees [other than the advisory committee members]. The advisory committee and chair may choose to include a session of more in-depth questioning open only to the advisory committee and the UNLV Graduate Faculty. The final phase of closed deliberation, and the vote to pass or fail the student, will only be open to the student's appointed advisory committee.

During the oral defense, the student must be able to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of a broad field of study and a detailed understanding of a more limited field. The advisory committee must unanimously pass the student. If the student passes, use Grad Rebel Gateway to fill out the approval forms and electronically send it to committee members and the graduate program coordinator for signature. If the committee does not unanimously pass the defense, the student is placed on probation via the Graduate College process and may request the committee to administer a second examination. See the [Graduate Catalog](#) for more information.

Qualifying Activities

After completing the master's thesis, graduate students must complete a qualifying activity before advancing to doctoral candidacy and prior to proposing the dissertation. The purpose of the activity is for the student to acquire not only the expertise in a given area, but also the ability to explain, discuss, and debate questions within that and related areas. Students should begin to develop their reading list and determine which option they want to pursue immediately after the master's thesis defense.

Students should propose their qualifying activity and reading list within 3 months after defending the master's thesis. Failure to propose the qualifying activity within 6 months after the master's thesis defense will result in the student being placed on probation and may result in separation from the program. Students must enroll in PSY 773 for 3 credits during the semester the student plans to defend the Qualifying Activity.

Option 1. Qualifying Paper(s)

In option one, the student will write a) one long paper; or b) three shorter papers that review and integrate relevant knowledge and research related to the student's area of specialization. Although there are no page requirements for the paper, successful papers typically range between 30 and 50 pages for option a) or between 10 and 20 pages each for option b).

The student will identify the topic and specific material to be covered in the paper(s). Prior to beginning the paper(s), the student will circulate a proposed format for the paper(s), a mission statement, and a reading list to committee members and obtain their approval. A typical reading list contains approximately 100 references for the one long paper or across the three shorter papers. An initial meeting with the committee is not required. When the committee approves the qualifying paper topic and reading list, students have six months to complete and defend the paper(s). Failure to complete the qualifying paper within nine months after the proposal approval date will result in the student being placed on probation and may result in separation from the program.

Once the final draft of the qualifying paper is completed, the student will schedule a meeting with the committee, and circulate a copy of the final draft to the committee members at least two weeks before the meeting. The committee and student will agree upon the format of the defense prior to the meeting. Typically, the student gives a brief presentation that is followed by a question and answer period. The defense of the qualifying paper will serve as an opportunity for the student to demonstrate his or her expertise. Committee deliberations will follow the presentation, for which the student is not present.

Option 2. Comprehensive Exam

In option two, the student will complete a qualifying examination that requires the student to integrate relevant knowledge and research related to the area of specialization. The exam can be written or oral. Typically, the written exam will consist of three consecutive days of in-class testing. On each day of the exam period, students will be given four questions from one committee member; students will be required to answer three of those questions within a five-hour period. For the oral exam, students should schedule a meeting for a five-hour time slot. Prior to the exam, each committee member should prepare at least 4-5 questions assessing the student's breadth and depth of knowledge in their topic area. Committee members for a written or oral exam should meet in advance of the student's exam to share their questions and ensure there is minimal overlap and that the questions appropriately target the proposed goals of the qualifying activity.

Prior to beginning the activity, the student will circulate a proposed mission statement and a reading list to committee members and obtain their approval for the topics. A typical reading list contains approximately 100 references. When the committee approves the procedures for the qualifying exam, students have six months to prepare for and complete the exam. Failure to complete the qualifying exam within nine months after the proposal approval date will result in the student being placed on probation and may result in separation from the program.

For the written exam, committee members may read and comment on all responses. Each committee member, however, will evaluate responses to the questions he or she submitted. Committee members are expected to evaluate responses within a week of the exam. For the oral exam, committee deliberations will follow the question and answer portion of the meeting.

Failure to pass qualifying activities

If a student fails to pass the qualifying activity, the committee will determine the specific remedial requirements (e.g., further exam questions, paper revisions, etc.). Students are expected to pass the qualifying activity on their first attempt, but may be given up to three attempts to pass before dismissal from the program. The student is expected to work independently on these remedial requirements. The student will have up to 3 months to submit the second revision of the qualifying activity. If a third revision is required, the student will be placed on probation to the Graduate College and the student will again have up to 3 months to submit the revised qualifying activity. Failure to meet a revision deadline is considered a failure of the attempt.

Qualifying Activity Paperwork

Once the proposal is approved, please use Grad Rebel Gateway to obtain signatures from committee members. From the dropdown menu for choosing type of milestone, choose "Other" and specify "Qualifying Activity Proposal" in the field below it. Once the defense is approved, please use Grad Rebel Gateway to obtain signatures from committee members. From the dropdown menu for choosing type of milestone, choose "Other" and specify "Qualifying Activity Defense" in the field below it.

Unlike the master's thesis and dissertation, the Qualifying Activity for our program does not require a Graduate College (GC) representative. The Appointment of Advisory Committee form and the generic Department Milestones Results Tracking form in Grad Rebel Gateway is used to document the approval and defense of this milestone. It does, however, require a GC representative's signature. Dr. Shelia Bock (Sheila.bock@unlv.edu) from Interdisciplinary, Gender & Ethnic Studies has graciously offered to provide a GC rep signature for our program. Dr. Bock will provide the signature on the GCR line on the form and will select the "alternate recommendation" option. In the comment box, she will insert the comment "GCR N/A on the committee". Please understand Dr. Bock does not have a formal role on the QA committee. She will not review the proposal or defense materials or attend defense meetings. Dr. Bock will simply assist with signing the necessary forms for the Graduate College records.

Doctoral Dissertation

The dissertation procedures are similar to the thesis procedures. Compared to preparing a master's thesis, however, the student preparing a dissertation should have a much more active and leading role in conceptualizing the research problem and developing and applying the methods to study the problem.

Proposal Development

The topic is developed with the mentor and in consultation with committee members (as needed). Proposal drafts are written and revised (and revised again), and pilot data are collected (as necessary). The final proposal draft should be submitted to committee members at least two weeks prior to the scheduled dissertation proposal meeting.

An alternative to fulfilling the dissertation requirement is the multiple article dissertation. If proposing this option, the student should describe three papers that will be under-review, in-press, or published by the time of the dissertation defense. All papers should report empirical research or meta-analyses undertaken as a doctoral student at UNLV; literature review articles are not acceptable for this option. Articles reporting master's thesis data are not acceptable for this option unless the article includes additional data (e.g., data collected after the original thesis, such as a second study) or an analysis of the data different from the thesis that answers a different research question.

The proposal describing the articles to be included for the multiple article dissertation should be submitted to committee members at least two weeks prior to the scheduled dissertation proposal meeting along with documentation of the student's contribution to the research. It is not necessary for all three articles to be complete at the time of the proposal; however, the papers should be far enough along for the committee to make an informed decision about allowing the student to move forward with the multiple paper dissertation option. Although the final defense document should include a general introduction, bridging chapters, and general conclusion, this content is not necessarily required at the time of the proposal. At the proposal meeting, students should be prepared to demonstrate their contributions to the research and discuss how the three papers tie together. Please see the [Graduate Catalog](#) for a full list of requirements if considering this option.

Dissertation Proposal Meeting

During the dissertation proposal meeting, committee members ask questions and give feedback regarding the design of the dissertation project. Normally, the student provides a brief overview of the introduction section and more detailed presentations of the hypothesis and research design. The student should be able to answer questions and clarify design issues. For the multiple article dissertation option, the student should also present how the research is related across the publications and their contribution to the empirical research, so the committee can determine whether it was substantial enough to include it in the dissertation.

Following questions, the student is asked to leave the room and the committee decides whether the student passes or fails the proposal meeting. Following committee deliberations, the student is then invited back to the meeting and informed of the committee's decisions. Note that the committee can request additional data or changes to the proposal for the traditional dissertation or multiple article dissertation. In the case of failure, the student will be recommended to be placed on probation to the Graduate College and is required to schedule a second proposal meeting after addressing the issues that resulted in failure.

When the student passes, use Grad Rebel Gateway to fill out the approval forms and electronically send it to committee members and the graduate program coordinator for signature. The Graduate College requires that students complete a minimum of 12 dissertation credits and that students be enrolled in at least 3 graduate credits during the semester the oral dissertation defense is conducted and the student intends to graduate (the graduate credits do not need to be dissertation credits if all 12 have been completed). Students are permitted to enroll in Dissertation credits only if they have completed all courses (except dissertation), passed milestone exams, and passed their dissertation proposal (Advanced to Candidacy). Please see the [Graduate Catalog](#) for more information.

Dissertation Defense Meeting

A student's advisor is expected to have approved the draft of the dissertation prior to it being distributed to other committee members. For the **multiple article dissertation**, the student should include an introductory chapter, a concluding chapter, and bridge sections introducing and linking each of the articles to form a cohesive document. Students are expected to give the approved draft of the dissertation to committee members at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense. The scheduled defense could be postponed if one or more committee members judge the draft to be subpar. Committee members are encouraged to notify the committee chair in this regard. Additionally, two weeks prior to the defense meeting, the student notifies the Psychology Department front office of the date and time of the defense and provides a copy of the final draft of the dissertation that is available for review.

The defense meeting is a formal presentation of the major research questions, results, and interpretations of the dissertation. The oral presentation is open to UNLV Graduate Faculty, graduate students, relevant administrators, and invited guests. The advisory committee chair must approve invited guests prior to the defense. The oral presentation may be followed by general questions of clarification from attendees [other than the advisory committee members]. The advisory committee and chair may choose to include a session of more in-depth questioning open only to the advisory committee and the UNLV Graduate Faculty. An additional phase of questioning with only the advisory committee and candidate may also be included. The final phase of closed deliberation, and the vote to pass or fail the student, will only be open to the student's appointed advisory committee.

During the oral defense, the student must be able to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of a broad field of study and a detailed understanding of a more limited field. The advisory committee must unanimously pass the student. If the student passes,

use the Grad Rebel Gateway to fill out the approval forms and electronically send it to committee members and the graduate program coordinator for signature. If the committee does not unanimously pass the student, the student may be recommended to be placed on probation to the Graduate College and may request the committee to administer a second examination. If the committee agrees to another examination, the student must wait at least three months before taking the second examination. The program may require additional course work, substantial reworking of the dissertation or project or whatever is believed necessary to prepare the student for the second examination. The Graduate College will not approve third examination requests.

Sample Program Timeline - Entering with B.A. or B.S. Milestone	Recommended Deadlines	Probation Dates
Propose Thesis	End of Summer Year 1	End of Spring Year 2
Defend Thesis	End of Spring Year 2	End of Spring Year 3
Propose Qualifying Activity	Within 3 months of thesis defense	6 months after thesis defense
Complete Qualifying Activity	Within 6 months of the proposal approval date	Within 9 months of the proposal approval date

Milestone	Recommended Deadlines	Probation Dates
Propose Thesis	End of Summer Year 1	End of Spring Year 2
Defend Thesis	End of Spring Year 2	End of Spring Year 3
Propose Qualifying Activity	Within 3 months of thesis defense	6 months after thesis defense
Complete Qualifying Activity	Within 6 months of the proposal approval date	Within 9 months of the proposal approval date
Propose Dissertation	End of Fall Year 4	End of Spring Year 5

Entering with M.A. or M.S.

Milestone	Recommended Deadlines	Probation Dates
Propose Qualifying Activity	End of Spring Year 1	End of Summer Year 1
Complete Qualifying Activity	Within 6 months of the proposal approval date	Within 9 months of the proposal approval date
Propose Dissertation	End of Fall Year 2	End of Spring Year 3
Defend Dissertation	End of Spring Year 3	End of Spring Year 4

Note that the recommended deadlines are when students should ideally complete the milestone. If a student fails to complete a milestone by the probation date, the Psychological and Brain Sciences Coordinator will recommend to the Graduate College that the student be placed on probation. Terms to end probation will be determined in consultation with the mentor and Psychological and Brain Sciences Program faculty. If the student fails to meet those terms, the Psychological and Brain Sciences Program

Coordinator will recommend to the Graduate College that the student be separated from the program.

Students can petition the Psychological and Brain Sciences Ph.D. Program for an extension of the deadlines in the event of extenuating circumstances (e.g., illness, disability, or publication productivity).

Professional Code of Ethics/Discipline Guidelines

UNLV Graduate College policy regarding academic integrity can be found in the [graduate catalog](#). The Psychological and Brain Sciences Doctoral Program endorses the American Psychological Association Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct. It is expected that all students adhere to these ethical standards in their roles as graduate students and graduate assistants.

Annual Mandatory Individual Development Plan and Procedures

Students are required to make adequate yearly progress towards degree completion. Each winter break and early spring term, graduate students are **required** to complete the Graduate Student Individual Development Plan (IDP) form. [Formerly known as the Student Annual Review]. The review covers the prior calendar year and assesses student progress, and it establishes reasonable goals for the year ahead.

Faculty Advisors/Graduate Coordinators have the option to provide feedback to each student's submitted IDP and acknowledge that they have reviewed the IDP.

Reported student data is shared with students' graduate coordinators and advisors to foster opportunities for discussion about students' strengths and weaknesses, accomplishments and next requirements, and mentoring plans so that students know what they need to do in order to progress successfully through their programs in a timely manner.

Students who are graduating are also required to complete the form in order to record their achievements since the data is also used to track UNLV metrics related to the annual productivity of all students.

The Psychological and Brain Sciences Ph.D. Program faculty conducts annual reviews of all currently enrolled Psychological and Brain Sciences students. During each year that the student is part of the program, the Program Coordinator will write a formal letter of evaluation for each student assessing their progress, conveying recommendations of the program faculty, and reminding students of upcoming deadlines. The mentor and student will review and sign the letter, which will subsequently be placed in the student's personnel file. Prior to the review, Psychological and Brain Sciences students are required to complete the annual mandatory Individual Development Plan distributed by the UNLV Graduate College each year they are in the program.

Students will be evaluated at least yearly in the following three areas: (1) academic performance; (2) scholarly research activity; and (3) ethical behavior and professional conduct. If the program determines that a student is not making satisfactory progress toward the degree, it may request the Graduate College dean to place the student on probation. Failure to meet the conditions of the probation will result in separation from the program.

Academic Performance

Students must obtain a grade of B- or better in each course taken for that course to count toward the degree. All students must maintain an overall GPA of at least 3.0. One grade below a B- (i.e., C+ or lower) will result in academic probation. Once on probation for receiving a grade below a B-, a second grade below a B- (in the same or a different class) will result in immediate separation from the program. If a student re-takes a course in which they received a grade lower than a B- (i.e., C+ or lower) and earns a B- or better, they will be removed from probation. A student may be on academic probation only twice during their graduate career in Psychology; a third probation will result in separation from the program. No student shall be allowed more than two simultaneous grades of incomplete, except in the case of a documented and approved medical leave.

Scholarly and Research Performance

Scholarly and research activities include participation in faculty research projects, as well as the

master's project, the doctoral dissertation, and other individual research projects. Both master's level and doctoral research are monitored and evaluated by the appropriate committee. Failure to make adequate progress on any of these projects will result in separation from the program.

Additional Program Information

Psychology Graduate Research Conference

Each third-year graduate student is expected to participate in the research conference that normally occurs each year during the Spring semester. The research conference allows the student an opportunity to present their master's thesis or other research project in a psychology conference format. First- and second-year graduate students are also expected to attend.

Teaching of Psychology Course

Individuals who are part-time graduate assistant instructors (PTI-GAs; third-year graduate students and/or those who have completed their master's thesis) are required to complete the Teaching of Psychology course. PTI-GAs normally teach two sections of General Psychology (PSY 101) each semester for two semesters. The Teaching of Psychology course must either be taken concurrently or completed prior to serving as an instructor in any course. After completing the Teaching of Psychology course and teaching General Psychology for one year, PTI-GAs may petition the department to teach other undergraduate Psychology courses (e.g., Research Methods, Social Psychology, etc.) if their PTI GA positions are renewed for a second year.

Transfer/waiver of Credits

Note that as per the [Graduate Catalog](#), no credits used to earn any other degree at UNLV or elsewhere can be applied toward fulfilling the required credit requirements for UNLV's Psychological and Brain Sciences Ph.D. Program. Required courses for the Ph.D. can be waived, if approved, but the student must complete those credits via a different course.

All transfer of credits or waivers of course requirements are contingent upon approval of the Psychological and Brain Sciences Program Steering Committee after consulting with relevant faculty, if applicable. To request transfer credits, the student must email the Program Coordinator with the request and submit relevant supporting materials (e.g., syllabi, grade received). Students who received a Master's degree at another institution and completed a Master's thesis pursuant to the completion of that degree may petition to have their thesis accepted to fulfill the master's thesis requirement of the Psychological and Brain Sciences Doctoral Program. Requests for transfer credits and waiver of program requirements must be made in the first two years of graduate study.

The process for requesting transfer credit or waiver of program requirements is outlined in the following four scenarios. Note that a master's degree in the following scenarios equals a minimum of 33 credits.

Scenario 1 applies to students who have a master's degree with a thesis, and the Psychological and Brain Sciences Program Steering Committee has accepted the thesis. For Psychological and Brain Sciences incoming students, if the M.A. is accepted, the student should follow the subplan requirements for post-master's students as noted in the [graduate catalog](#) for the emphasis track. In this scenario, a master's degree from UNLV will not be awarded.

Scenario 2 applies when a student has a master's degree with no completed thesis, or a master's degree with a completed thesis that the Psychological and Brain Sciences Program Steering Committee has not accepted. For these incoming students, a maximum of 13 credits may be waived. Psychological and Brain Sciences students, however, must meet the residency requirement of 14 graduate credits plus 6 thesis credits (20 total) taken at UNLV for the master's degree. These students must also complete the thesis. Upon successful completion of these requirements, students will

receive a master's degree from UNLV.

Scenario 3 applies when students have former graduate status, such as graduate classes previously taken at another institution, but have not received a graduate degree from that institution. For these incoming students, a maximum of 9 credits may be transferred toward the master's degree from UNLV.

Scenario 4 applies when a student has taken graduate level coursework at UNLV, but has not matriculated into the Psychological and Brain Sciences Doctoral Program. Up to 15 credits can be transferred toward fulfillment of the master's degree requirement.

Graduate Assistantships

Some students accepted into the Psychological and Brain Sciences Doctoral Program will be offered graduate assistantships, which are intended to help support students in their graduate work and provide relevant work experiences. Graduate assistantships are provided to the department and approved by the Graduate College. These positions are available on a competitive basis and typically include a nine-month stipend plus tuition, fee waivers, and optional student health insurance. Graduate assistants must enroll in and maintain a minimum of 6 semester hours of graduate credit and are expected to spend 20 hours per week on departmental duties such as instruction and/or research.

Outside Employment

Individuals who are not graduate assistants may establish and maintain outside employment as long as they are still making adequate progress in the program. Those students who are receiving graduate assistant support from the university in any fashion (e.g., assistantship, grant) will be able to obtain outside employment only with the permission of the Department of Psychology and Graduate College. In any case, for those students with graduate assistantships, employment must not exceed 10 hours per week. Prior to beginning any outside employment, the student must have approval from the student's advisor, the Psychological and Brain Sciences Program Director, and the Graduate College dean.

Funding

The faculty encourage all graduate students in the Psychological and Brain Sciences Doctoral Program to actively seek funding throughout their graduate career. Students can locate external and internal funding opportunities via the Office of Sponsored Projects, National Institutes, Private Foundations, and the Graduate College. Graduate students can also work with their mentor to gain experience writing and applying for grants.

Conflict Resolution Policy

Examples of conflicts include, but are not limited to, the following: having a department policy applied inappropriately, being required to complete inappropriate tasks as part of an assistantship, being improperly terminated from a program, and being required to meet unreasonable requirements for a degree. Conflicts are usually most effectively resolved at the lowest level; students are therefore encouraged to work out conflicts directly with the persons involved. If a student is unable to resolve a conflict in this manner, or feels that he or she is being treated unfairly, he or she is encouraged to discuss the concerns with any member of the faculty, the Psychological and Brain Sciences program coordinator, or the department chair. (If the Psychological and Brain Sciences program coordinator and/or the department chair are involved in the conflict, the student can discuss their concerns directly with the associate dean of the College of Liberal Arts.) If the conflict is not resolved in this manner, the student may file a formal appeal with the dean of the College of Liberal Arts and then the Graduate College dean.

Discipline Resources

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Seventh Edition (2020)
American Psychological Association
Association for Psychological Science

University Resources

The Graduate Academy: Innovative Leadership, Professional, and Career Development

The goal of the Graduate Academy is to serve as a virtual resource providing support and many professional opportunities to UNLV graduate students. The Academy offers information about events and services such as graduate certificate programs, workshops, training sessions and career services. You can follow Academy activities via social media or look for regular updates on the website.

Alumni Engagement

With an alumni base 150,000+ strong, the UNLV Alumni Engagement offers a variety of services and opportunities in support of alumni and their families. UNLV alumni are encouraged to support the values of higher learning through advocacy, involvement, and giving.

Commencement Office

Located in the UNLV Office of the Registrar, the commencement office is the last step in the graduation process. Please check with the commencement office for information on the commencement ceremony and your diploma; for all other information about graduate student degree completion and graduation, including thesis/dissertation requirements and doctoral hooding, please contact the Graduate College. It is the students' responsibility to ensure they apply for graduation on time and submit all required forms to the Graduate College. Questions regarding thesis/dissertation should be directed to the Graduate College Student Services Team and questions regarding required forms should be directed to the Graduate College RPC Team.

Institutional Engagement and Experience

The vision of the Institutional Engagement and Experience is to advocate, promote, and support the advancement of equity, inclusiveness, and empowerment of a continuously changing collegiate and global community. The mission is to provide leadership and support for UNLV's engagement mission: *to nurture equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment*. This Office is housed under the Division of Human Resources and also handles UNLV Title IX questions, inquiries, and reporting.

Disability Resource Center (DRC)

The DRC is committed to supporting students with disabilities at UNLV through the appropriate use of advocacy, accommodations, and supportive services to ensure access to campus courses, services, and activities. The DRC is the university-designated office that determines and facilitates reasonable accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Graduate students with disabilities must disclose to the DRC in order to receive appropriate accommodations.

Graduate Appeals and Issue Resolution

The Office of Graduate Student Services at the Graduate College assists graduate and professional students with addressing concerns and overcoming personal, academic, or financial challenges that might hinder their ability to be successful in their program. The office also provides information and student-centered issue-resolution services and offers guidance, information, and assistance when regular channels have failed to provide graduate students with the information they need to solve problems. Please see website for more information: <https://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/appeals-issue-resolution>

UNLV Global and the Office of International Student and Scholar Compliance

International Student and Scholar Compliance (ISSC) ensures compliance with both SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) and federal law, so that the university can continue to be authorized by the U.S. federal government to enroll international students; host and hire international scholars; assist and advise employment eligibility and authorization relating to international students and scholars, and visa, travel, and immigration issues; provide critical and specialized services to the international students and scholars of the UNLV community; and facilitate their transition to the campus and the U.S.

The Care Center

The Care Center is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all genders through programming, services, and advocacy for the UNLV community. The Women's Center has informational resources, brochures, and flyers for a variety of on and off campus organizations to help empower and protect yourself, and learn about your options. They also provide free tampons, pads, and condoms.

The Intersection

The Intersection is a one-stop resource for UNLV's highly diverse student body — a comprehensive multicultural center grounded in the academic life of our students. As an intersecting campus resource, the Intersection helps ensure students, particularly first-generation and students of color, successfully navigate their academic careers. Here, all members of campus can discuss their differences, discover their similarities, and build a shared sense of belonging.

UNLV Libraries

UNLV Libraries has always been more than books; they are about encouraging students and creating quality programs that elevate growth and learning. Please visit their website for important information about the services they offer to graduate students.

Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA)

The Graduate & Professional Student Association serves all currently enrolled University of Nevada, Las Vegas graduate and professional students. The GPSA maintains the Graduate Student Commons located in the Lied Library room 2141 and Gateway Building PDAC Room. The facility a working office equipped with a copier, fax, flatbed scanners, color laser printer, office supplies, and computers with printers and a small kitchen area. The GPSA is the graduate student governance body at UNLV; the GPSA Council consists of one graduate student representative from each graduate department, and they meet monthly. The GPSA also provides volunteer opportunities, sponsors social events, and supports graduate student research through the graduate research and travel grants program.

Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities

The Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities is a student-centered, service-oriented office located within the Division of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities collaborates with the UNLV community to provide an inclusive system through enforcement of the *UNLV Student Code of Conduct* by:

- Promoting awareness of student rights and responsibilities;
- Establishing accountability for student choices;
- Creating opportunities for involvement in the process; and
- Striving to uphold the values and ethics that advance the common good.

Military and Veteran Services Center

The Military and Veteran Service Center is staffed with veterans and veteran education benefits-experienced staff to assist more than 1,800 veterans, dependents, active duty service members, National Guard members, and reservists attending UNLV. Their mission is to develop a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success.

The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office

The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office supports higher-education access and persistence by providing financial aid to eligible students. The office partners with student organizations, the UNLV Foundation, the Graduate College, and other external constituents to provide financial aid learning opportunities and scholarship support for graduate students.

Writing Center

This is a free service to UNLV students to help you with any writing project, from papers to creative writing, to resumes, and we can work with you at any stage of the writing process. The center can help you brainstorm, make an outline, work on your drafts, or just be a soundboard for your ideas. The center staff can assist you in person, or via the Online Writing Lab (OWL) page.

University Policies and Procedures

Graduate students are responsible for knowing and acting in accordance with UNLV Policies and Procedures. To view the most commonly referenced campus policies and procedures, you can refer to the following websites:

- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Activation for Military Service](#)
- [Change of Address](#)
- [FERPA/Privacy Rights](#)

- [Health Insurance - Mandatory](#)
- [Jean Clery Campus Safety and Security Report](#)
- [Proof of Immunization](#)
- [Policies and Procedures on the Protection of Research Subjects](#)
- [Rebelmail Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct Code](#)
- [Student Computer Use Policy](#)
- [Title IX](#)

UNLV does not discriminate in its employment practices or in its educational programs or activities, including admissions, on the basis of sex/gender pursuant to Title IX, or on the basis of any other legally protected category as is set forth in NSHE Handbook Title 4, Chapter 8, Section 13. Reports of discriminatory misconduct, questions regarding Title IX, and/or concerns about noncompliance with Title IX or any other anti-discrimination laws or policies should be directed to UNLV's Title IX Coordinator Michelle Sposito.

The Title IX Coordinator can be reached through the [online reporting form](#), by email at titleixcoordinator@unlv.edu, by phone at (702) 895-4055, by mail at 4505 S. Maryland Parkway, Box 451062, Las Vegas, NV, 89154-1062, or in person at Frank and Estella Beam Hall (BEH), Room 555.

To ensure compliance with Graduate College policies and procedures, please review the relevant sections of the [Graduate Catalog](#):

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Academic Policies](#)
- [Admission and Registration Information](#)
- [Degree Progression Policies & Procedures](#)

In addition, the [Graduate College website](#) contains additional information regarding policies and procedures.

Nothing in this handbook supersedes any NSHE, UNLV, or Graduate College policy.

Handbook Information

Last revised	Revised by	Changes summary
March 13, 2015	Jennifer Rennels	Reformatted to fit Graduate College template, updated defense meeting information as per department faculty decision regarding oral defense guidelines on 12/3/14, updated program timeline as per experimental program faculty meeting on 3/11/15, and made minor edits as needed.
July 7, 2015	Jennifer Rennels	Made minor edits based on feedback from Kim Barchard.
May17, 2016	Jennifer Rennels	Made minor edits and updated transfer/waiver of credits section as per experimental program faculty meeting on 10/28/15, and added multiple article dissertation option as per experimental program faculty meeting on 4/25/16.
April 5, 2017	Jennifer Rennels	Added potential areas of specialization and course plans for students in the quantitative/experimental emphasis. Fixed some typos.
June 30, 2017	Jennifer Rennels	Updated hyperlinks that were no longer accurate.
Spring 2018	Jennifer Rennels	Made changes regarding the qualifying activity information: 1) noted when to enroll in PSY 772; 2) revised and added options available for fulfilling this milestone; and 3) added a timeframe for when the qualifying activity should be proposed as per experimental program faculty meetings on 2/21/18 and 2/28/18. Updated the information regarding the multiple article dissertation as per experimental program faculty meetings on 2/21/18 and 2/28/18 and an email to the Graduate College Dean on 5/11/18. Made changes regarding which forms to have signed for the various milestones as per the 4/25/18 experimental program faculty meeting.
Spring 2019	Jennifer Rennels	Made changes regarding thesis guidelines as per 3/6/19 Experimental Ph.D. program faculty meeting. Added course number information for areas of specialization in the Quantitative/ Experimental area of study. Updated the process for getting committee approval for proposals and defenses by removing reference to paper forms and referring to the Grad Rebel Gateway for form completion.

Last revised	Revised by	Changes summary
Spring 2020	Jennifer Rennels	Made changes regarding the recommended deadlines and probation dates for proposing the qualifying activity for students entering with an M.A. or M.S. as per the 1/29/20 Experimental Ph.D. program faculty meeting. Made changes regarding the recommended deadlines and probation dates for defending the qualifying activity to align with the text information in the handbook. Revised the multiple article dissertation section to provide more guidelines when proposing this option as per Experimental Ph.D. program faculty's unanimous agreement in an online vote conducted 3/11/20-3/17/20. Changed the Qualifying Activity course number from PSY 772 to PSY 773 as per the approval at the Graduate Course Review Committee meeting on 3/11/20. Also clarified that students must enroll in 3 credits of PSY 773 during the semester they plan to defend the Qualifying Activity.
Spring 2020	Emily Lin & Alex Goncalves	Updated the Ph.D. program name from Experimental Psychology to Psychological & Brain Sciences throughout the handbook.
Spring 2021	Jennifer Rennels	Changed Quantitative/Experimental Area of Study to Quantitative, Social, and Community and added descriptions to specialization for this area of study and two new areas of specialization as per experimental faculty approval at the 11/25/20 Experimental Program meeting and psychology department approval at the 12/9/20 faculty meeting. Replaced references to "Experimental" with "Psychological and Brain Sciences."
Spring 2022	Jennifer Rennels	Changed some of the formatting. Updated information regarding credit enrollment for the thesis and dissertation to match Graduate College policy. Updated information regarding forms to be completed for the Qualifying Activity. Removed some redundancies regarding student annual evaluations, so all the information was in one place. Changed she/he pronouns to they. Removed reference to the Research Conference Participation form because it is no longer utilized. Updated the discipline resources section and links.
Spring 2023	Jennifer Rennels	Updated information regarding the forms needed for choosing a faculty advisor and appointing an advisory committee on p. 4. Updated information regarding the comprehensive exam for Option 2 of the qualifying activity on p. 6. Updated information regarding how to go about requesting a transfer/waiver of credits on p. 11. Added a section encouraging students to actively seek funding throughout their graduate career on p. 12. These changes were approved by the PBS faculty via email.
Spring 2024	Jennifer Rennels	Removed neuroscience from the areas of study in the Psychological & Brain Sciences Ph.D. program because it is now offered via the Interdisciplinary Neuroscience Ph.D. program.

Last revised	Revised by	Changes summary
Spring 2025	Jennifer Rennels	Only made minor changes by placing commas between the Cognitive, Developmental, and Quantitative, Social, and Community areas of study on page 1. Also made some minor changes and suggestions in various parts of the document to improve readability.
Spring 2026	Jennifer Rennels	Only made minor changes to improve accessibility