DOCTORAL STUDENT HANDBOOK

Clinical Psychology
Doctoral Training Program

University at Albany, State University of New York

August, 2018
WELCOME TO GRADUATE SCHOOL! The Psychology Department at the University at Albany, SUNY is part of the College of Arts & Sciences. The Department includes five Ph.D. granting program areas (behavioral neuroscience, clinical psychology, cognitive psychology, industrial/organizational psychology, and social psychology) and hosts a very large undergraduate population of psychology majors. We are housed in the Social Sciences building on the uptown campus. In cooperation with the counseling psychology program, we operate a training clinic, Psychological Services Center, near the downtown campus.

The American Psychological Association has continuously accredited the doctoral program in clinical psychology since 1979.

Questions related to the program’s accredited status should be directed to the Commission on Accreditation:

Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation
American Psychological Association
750 1st Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002
Phone 202-336-5979
Email: apaaccred@apa.org
Web: www.apa.org/ed/accreditation

The program, faculty, and students have a long-standing reputation for making significant contributions to the science and practice of clinical psychology. Our program is evidence-based with strong links to the field of cognitive-behavioral therapy. At present, we have a total of 10 core clinical faculty, all of whom are active in teaching and research, including clinical supervision in varied contexts. In 2009, our doctoral program was recognized by the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies as the recipient of the prestigious Outstanding Training Program Award. That award was no accident and reflects the tradition and community – current and former faculty and students – that you are now part of.

We hope your stay at the University at Albany will be fruitful and rewarding. To ease the transition and help you get off on the right foot, we have prepared this handbook. In it you will find information of all sorts, some significant and some more trivial in nature.

As is true of most things, the contents of this handbook will change and evolve over time. To ensure that you are on top of things, you should make an effort to read this handbook carefully. Additionally, we recommend that you refer to the Graduate Bulletin for rules, regulations, etc., regarding department, clinical program, degree requirements, and the like. You can find the Graduate Bulletin on the web at https://www.albany.edu/graduatebulletin/. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the current issue of this publication, especially those sections dealing with Student Responsibility, Academic Standards, and Grievance Procedures. These regulations apply to all graduate students in the department and the clinical program and it is important that you be aware of their implications.

In addition, be sure to read department memos and announcements as they appear. Changes will probably first be communicated via email, but may also appear in your mailbox in the room next to the department main office. The clinical program also maintains a bulletin
board on the 3rd floor of Social Sciences, and memos and news will be posted there from time to
time. The psychology department website also includes a page where you can access and
download forms that you will need as you advance through the program (see Psychology
Department Forms).

Most of you will find graduate school different from your previous educational endeavors.
Unlike undergraduate training, where the emphasis is on getting good grades and having a high
GPA, graduate school includes a range of scholarly, applied, and professional activities that go
well beyond what you do in the classroom.

Indeed, one of the greatest challenges of graduate school is in making the transition from
thinking and behaving like a student to thinking and behaving like a professional, whether that be
in research, clinical, academic, consultation, or teaching/service contexts. Being the top of the
class in graduate school is far less important (now and particularly later on) than doing quality
work in the classroom, in applied or laboratory research settings, clinical settings, or in the role
of teacher. Quality and effort will not only help contribute to your professional development and
goals, but also better the program and the lives of those with whom you have contact.

You will find that you and your new peers constitute a highly select group with unique skills and
talents, but united by a shared interests in clinical science and practice within a cognitive-
behavioral framework. You will also find that you will have opportunities to form relationships
with a highly successful group of clinical and non-clinical faculty and supervisors. This is not a
place to nurture conflict and unhealthy forms of competition with your peers and other
colleagues. Make time to get to know your peers, your mentor, faculty, and supervisors.

Though we pride ourselves on having a collegial program made up of bright and caring
individuals, we don’t want you to get too comfortable here. Ultimately, you are here to acquire
knowledge and skills so that you can function as a clinical psychologist with three letters after
your name, Ph.D., and meet your career goals. Our program is designed so that you can complete
your degree requirements leading to the Ph.D. within 5 years (4 years on campus plus 1 year pre-
doctoral internship).

Motivation and hard work are the major determinants of whether you attain your Ph.D. The
faculty is here to help you do just that. In the process, it is important that problems be identified
early. You play an important role here, and we want to empower you to step up and take charge
of your education and training.

Thus, if you are experiencing difficulties, then please do seek out help and guidance
immediately. For instance, if you are having problems in class, then talk with the instructor, and
perhaps your research/assistantship advisor/supervisor, the Director of Clinical Training, the
Chair of the Department, the Director of Graduate Studies, or the Graduate Office at the
University (more or less in that order). Speak to your classmates and more senior students too.
The same is true of difficulties you may be having with your research, assistantship, or those that
may be of a more personal nature and that may even require a referral. Getting behind or
sidetracked is a surefire way to delay or halt attainment of your short and long-term goals, and
hence your success.

Though we go to great lengths to help you to avoid delaying or halting your graduate studies,
there are circumstances where such actions may be necessary. In such cases, you may be granted
a formal leave from your studies, with the expectation of returning at a later date (because there
are procedures that must be followed, you should contact the Director of Graduate Studies for
advice).
Lastly, after varying periods of time in graduate school some students realize that a career in psychology is not for them. If this happens, then don't feel that you have to continue out of a sense of obligation or to avoid embarrassment, etc. No one will think any less of you for making reasonable decisions about your life, and we certainly don't want you to make yourself miserable by continuing doing something you know you don't want to do. Yet, before making such a major decision, please do talk it over with your mentor/advisor, Director of Clinical Training, and others.

Again, on behalf of the clinical faculty and graduate students, we want to welcome you to Albany, and look forward to getting to know you over the coming years!

The Clinical Faculty
University and Department Requirements

Information specific to the University at Albany, Department of Psychology, and Clinical Training Program follows. Initially, the Director of Graduate Studies in Psychology and/or the Director of Clinical Training will serve as your advisor and provide signatures as needed. Later, your research supervisor will be in the best position to give you necessary advice. Remember, if you don't know or are not sure, ask the DCT or your mentor.

University Requirements

Overview

To become a candidate for the Ph.D. (a formal status conferred by the Graduate Academic Council), you have to complete the requisite 66 hours, the tool requirement, pass the Qualifying Examination, and meet the residency requirement of one academic year of course work beyond the master's level or its equivalent (usually the first two years).

University requirements are minimal

First, you need 66 hours of graduate credit to attain the Ph.D. This is no problem for clinical students, but can appear to be for students in other areas. If you take the maximum number of hours each semester (and remember that you will probably be here for at least four years), you will have no trouble meeting this requirement. Dissertation load credit (which you typically take near the end when you have finished all courses and are working on the dissertation and need to maintain continuous enrollment) does not count in the 66; nor does a course you use to satisfy the tool requirement (see below). A Master's degree is not required; however, you may take the degree if you wish and without needing to register for the 699 course titled Master’s Thesis. In fact, do not register for 699 (Master's degree credit) unless advised to do so by your mentor or the faculty.

Tool requirement

The tool is defined as a course or area of study involving both a skill and an execution component, which will aid you in the completion of the dissertation and in future research endeavors. The tool must be satisfied following admission and in addition to the regular program of study. Most students fulfill this requirement by taking a course in advanced statistics, and some opt for a course in computer programming. However, a course is not mandatory as a means to fulfill the tool requirement. In fact, structured and supervised projects or experiences are also possible (e.g., gaining skills in administration of structured clinical interviews, specific interventions, or assessment technologies such as psychophysiological assessment or neuropsychological batteries). A student must earn at least a B in a course s/he intends to use to satisfy the tool requirement.

Transfer of credits (waiver of required courses)

If you have had prior graduate work, you can transfer up to 30 hours toward the University requirement of 66. To accomplish this, take the relevant transcript to the Director of Graduate Studies in Psychology, and s/he will take the steps necessary to process your request. However, using prior graduate work in lieu of Department requirements is another matter. To be waived out of a required course on the basis of a previous course, you must have the recommendation of
the instructor of the course in question. So, you will need to meet with them, and ought to expect that they will want to see a syllabus, textbook, your transcript, or assignments to decide whether your previous course work is equivalent to a required course within our Department. If that instructor believes that your prior course content is equivalent, s/he will inform the Department Chair, who then makes the final decision. It is important to remember that students entering with prior graduate work cannot assume that they will receive credit for that work or be waived out of any program requirements. These decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, typically after the student arrives on campus. In some instances, students are informed of the manner in which their prior graduate work will be treated as a condition of their admission. You can find more information on the waiver policy on the Department of Psychology website (https://www.albany.edu/psychology/departmental_requirement.php).

**Psychology Department Requirements**

**Expected professional behavior of graduate students**

Faculties within the Department are expected to function as good colleagues and good departmental stewards and we expect the same behavior of our graduate students. Think responsibility here, and be mindful of what you do with your behavior. This is how other people will know you.

With that in mind, all graduate students are expected to attend classes and come prepared to contribute to class discussion. In the event of emergencies, or in cases where circumstances arise that would keep the student from fulfilling normal obligations (e.g., accident, illness, conference travel), students should notify instructors, mentors, and supervisors. And, you should seek permission from supervisors regarding situations where you will fail to keep your commitments. In the case of research and clinical activities, this action would also normally include the student making arrangements with other staff and colleagues such that the student’s obligations/duties/clients are covered during the absence. It is poor form to fail show up for class, a meeting, a proctoring assignment, a lab meeting, a clinical obligation or appointment with your clients, or for research hours. This kind of behavior will reflect badly on you and should be avoided.

**Required and optional courses**

All students are required to take the statistics sequence consisting of 510 and 511 and the research sequence. Depending on program, each student must take four of the following courses: APSY 601 (Behavioral Neuroscience), APSY 603 (Cognitive), APSY 604 (Developmental), APSY 605 (Social), 640 (Psychopathology), or 641 (Organizational). The suggested (and in some cases required) sequence of such out of area courses for clinical students is outlined later on.

**Grades and academic performance**

A grade of "C" in 510 (i.e., first part of the statistics sequence) requires that the student repeat the course and postpone enrollment in 511 until 510 is satisfactorily completed. Students must maintain a "B" average in the four courses chosen from among those listed above. Failure to do so means either that one of the courses must be repeated or that additional ones be taken with grades sufficient to balance low grades previously earned, thus attaining the “B” average. An overall GPA of less than a “B” constitutes grounds for dismissal from the University.
Initial Research Project (IRP)

The academic goal of the IRP (formerly known as the APSY 600 A/B project) is to demonstrate basic research competency in the student’s subfield of psychology. The IRP is considered a milestone rather than a course, and will show up on your transcript as such. To fulfill the goal of the IRB, the student must: (a) generate a novel hypothesis or novel hypotheses (b) statistically analyze appropriate data to test the hypothesis or hypotheses and (c) submit a manuscript written in the format specific to the student’s subdiscipline to the faculty advisor. An approved Master’s Thesis completed under the direction of a faculty member in the Psychology Department, or under the direction of a research mentor agreed upon by the student’s faculty advisor, can fulfill the IRP requirement. The student’s faculty advisor and another faculty member in the Psychology Department will determine whether the submitted manuscript meets this requirement. The IRB manuscript or thesis must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies prior to the beginning of the fall semester of the student’s 3rd year.

Students entering with a Master's degree must complete the IRP as well. It is your responsibility to consult with faculty about their willingness to supervise your project and the faculty member must agree to do so. Because you are required to select a research mentor soon after your arrival on campus, it is possible that your initial arrangement will not work out. If this happens, then talk it over with your supervisor and then make arrangements with another faculty member. However, this practice is not encouraged because it can significantly delay your ability to complete the IRP by the end of your second year of graduate school.

When the project is complete, you must submit a copy of the paper (i.e., manuscript length, APA style), along with the necessary form (available on the Department’s web site in Psychology Department Forms) and your advisor’s signature, to the Director of Graduate Studies for approval, and then the Chair of the Department for final approval and a signature. Please check with Cathy Krug before re-printing the paper; there is a move toward making this submission electronically.

Lastly, be advised that research typically takes longer to complete than you might think or expect. You have to read and chat with your advisor to formulate an idea. You’ll need time to do a literature search, develop a plan for methodology, design, and write your IRB proposal. Then, you’ll need to allow a few weeks for the IRB to be reviewed and then several more weeks to respond to IRB suggested revisions before you have final IRB approval. Then, you ought to anticipate that subject recruitment may not go smoothly (e.g., participants may not show up for scheduled appointments, or drop out prematurely, to name a few). After that, you’ll need to spend time with your data, cleaning it up, working out the relevant analyses, and then time to make sense of the results and write that part up, along with the discussion.

During this time, and certainly after you have a first complete draft of your IRP ready, you’ll need to allow your “busy” faculty mentor time (1 -2 weeks is reasonable, at least during the academic year) to read your draft and provide feedback. Though you ought to continue to work on your IRP to polish it while waiting for feedback, you will need to plan for another round of revisions, and perhaps re-analyses, and then time for your advisor to read another draft, and so on. Your advisor can assist you in planning your time accordingly, but do allow time for your research supervisor to provide feedback on the written draft of your Initial Research Project, including time to make edits and several revisions (some of which may be substantial) prior to the deadline.

In the process, anticipate that faculty may not have time or be available to read and comment on
your drafts during the summer months, or perhaps because of other personal or work-related commitments (e.g., travel). So, what you need to do here is consider your schedule and that of your advisor. A good starting point is to develop some goals starting now so that you are positioned to submit your IRP with time to spare, and even time to take a well deserved break after it is submitted.

Master’s degree

You may opt to earn a Master's Degree if you wish, and most clinical students end up doing just that. To do so, you need 30 hours of credit including APSY 510/511 plus 24 hours from the classes listed in the first year sequence of classes. Most students who wish to pursue the Master's choose to turn their IRP into a thesis. To do this, you must do what’s necessary to turn the IRP into an acceptable thesis and arrange for an oral defense. What is considered acceptable for an M.A. thesis vs. an IRP paper is at the discretion of your faculty supervisor.

The Committee for the oral defense should consist of your IRP supervisor plus at least one (preferably two) other faculty members. Upon successful conclusion of the oral defense your supervisor should send a letter to the Graduate Office, with notification of the outcome. You should file a “Graduate Degree Application” form with the Registrar as early as possible in the semester in which you plan on getting the degree. There is also a form that needs to be signed by your committee members at the time of passing the oral defense.

Qualifying exams (Quals)

Students complete their qualifying exams in the spring semester of their third year. Completion of the IRP is a prerequisite for beginning the qualifying exams. Students failing either the oral presentation of a case or the research paper on the first try can take them again. A second failure constitutes grounds for dismissal from the University; however, after consultation with relevant faculty, and if so advised, students may petition the Department faculty for another opportunity to take the exam.

Advisory/Dissertation Committee and Procedures

Overview

Everything you do subsequent to entering graduate school contributes to the attainment of the Ph.D. However, there is some additional information you need to be aware of. The following pertains to establishing a Dissertation Committee and to the nuts and bolts of getting the dissertation through the process of final acceptance.

Every graduate student in psychology must have an advisory/dissertation committee whose membership consists of a chair and two other members. Initially, this committee is responsible for planning course work with the student beyond the first year core; approving the tool subject, its selection, the manner in which it is pursued, and the method of evaluation; and it may participate in the writing and grading of the qualifying examination. This committee may evolve into the student's dissertation committee.

Procedure to establish an advisory/dissertation committee

The procedure for establishing the advisory/dissertation committee is as follows:

1. During the second year of graduate study, the student asks a faculty member of the
Psychology Department to act as chair of his/her committee. The chair will usually, but not necessarily, be the faculty member who is supervising the student's Initial Research Project.

2. The chair and the student select the other members of the committee. Upon their consent, the total membership of the committee is submitted to the Chair of the Department for approval. The chair of the committee must be a member of the department, and at least one other member of the committee must be from the College (this includes other Psychology Department faculty). Persons holding adjunct positions with the department may serve as committee members.

3. The membership of the committee may be changed with the agreement of all concerned and the approval of the Department Chair.

4. The chair of the committee may continue in that capacity subsequent to leaving the academic unit.

Responsibilities of the dissertation committee

The advisory/dissertation committee has the following responsibilities:

1. The total committee must approve the dissertation topic.

2. Students are urged to circulate copies of their proposal among the entire departmental faculty for suggestions. All members must be available to consult with the student as s/he develops his/her research proposal.

3. Upon successful competition of the oral defense of the dissertation proposal, each member of the dissertation committee will sign the dissertation proposal form.

4. The chair of the committee will be the individual most actively guiding the student during the data gathering and analysis stages. It is the student’s responsibility to keep the other members up-to-date re: his/her progress. The total committee is responsible for consulting with the student upon his/her request. The chair of the committee may call meetings of the total committee periodically.

5. If the research is to be conducted away from the Albany campus, arrangements with the appropriate authorities must be agreed upon prior to data collection. Normally, the chair will be the responsible liaison with the off-campus facility.

6. Two of the three members of the committee must provide approving signature to the final completed copy of the dissertation submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies.

Oral dissertation defense

Each student must give an oral defense of the completed dissertation before their committee prior to the preparation of the final typed form. And, in the process, all faculty from the department are invited to attend. The chair of the dissertation committee will determine the format of the oral examination. In addition to the department faculty, other individuals may be invited to attend by the chair of the committee upon the request and/or consent of the candidate. Copies of the dissertation must be made available for those who wish to read it prior to the defense (typically in the main office of the Psychology Department). Questions and discussion pertaining to the dissertation may be raised by anyone attending the defense within the format determined by the dissertation committee chair.
Upon completion of a revision, if necessary, the student must present the final typed copy to his/her committee for their approval signatures. The copy is to be delivered to the Department Chair for signature. The Chair of the Department will transmit the dissertation and recommendation for award of the Ph.D. degree to the Office of Graduate Studies. It’s a good idea to inform the Director of Graduate Studies in Psychology that your committee has formally accepted your dissertation proposal. A form is available for that purpose.

**Financial Support**

**Overview**

The Department of Psychology makes every effort to support all graduate students for at least the first three years of their enrollment. In recent years, we have been successful supporting students into their fourth year as well via grants, clinical placements in the community, and teaching positions. According to University regulations, grant stipends are subject to the same requirements and limitations as University ones.

Other students are supported by funds allocated to the Department by the University, most often in the form of graduate assistantships. Most assistantships are awarded for one academic year at a time, and there is no guarantee that they will be renewed, for their availability is dependent upon annual allocations (note New York State residents must also apply for TAP awards) and satisfactory performance in your assistantship role and your academic progress.

Graduate assistantships are formally “teaching assistantships” and require 20 hours of work per week, carry stipends of $17,000 for the academic year, and include a tuition waiver (as appropriate). Students holding these assistantships are usually assigned to individual faculty to aid in teaching or administrative activities. Assistants are also required to serve as exam proctors in undergraduate sections as assigned. As an exam proctor, you are expected to carry out your assignments or arrange for substitutes in the event of schedule conflicts. Failure to do so will result in censure and additional proctoring assignments. The performance of each graduate assistant is evaluated at the end of each semester and appropriate feedback provided. Such evaluations can influence the award of subsequent assistantships.

**Application and selection process**

During the spring semester, all interested students are given the opportunity to apply for an assistantship for the following year. They are also given the opportunity to indicate their preference for assignments. Faculty also have a voice in expressing their preferences for assistants and every effort is made to match first choices.

It is important to understand a bit about Department policy here. That policy states that some faculty members will have a graduate student assigned to assist with their teaching duties (hence, department funded assistants are called TAs, not RAs). In addition, there are various Departmental functions that require assistants, such as the Department's Undergraduate Advisement Office, the Research Subject Pool, to assist in specific undergraduate courses, etc. Thus, not all assistants will receive their first choice, nor will all be assigned to an individual faculty member.

Also, the imbalance between numbers of assistants and faculty within areas and between faculty and assistant interests will result in some arbitrariness in assignment. We go to great lengths to avoid such arbitrariness in assignments, but sometimes it is inevitable.
Depending on the program, students usually take from 12 to 17 hours of credit during each semester of the first year. After that, the normal load is 9 hours. University regulations regarding assistantships (department or grant) put these upper limits on semester loads. Once course work is out of the way and more time is being spent on the dissertation (usually during the third and fourth years), you can enroll in advanced clinical seminars and dissertation (or load) credit. Once you are admitted to doctoral candidacy, you will enroll for only one credit of APSY 899 and still be certified as being a full-time student for loan certification.

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Information Specific to the Clinical Program

About The Program

The Clinical Psychology program is fully accredited by the American Psychological Association, and is steeped in tradition as one of the best cognitive-behavioral training programs in the country. In fact, our program received the 2009 Outstanding Training Program Award by the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies in November 2009 at the annual meeting in New York City. This is a great honor, and speaks to our tradition of excellence.

Owing to our history, there is a behavioral or cognitive-behavioral bent to much of the research and clinical training at Albany. Yet, this is certainly not the exclusive approach of all faculty members. The clinical program at Albany adopts a scientist-practitioner model, which attempts to instill a scientific approach to research and clinical practice. This evidence-based model is the core that binds together our shared interests.

We seek to train well rounded doctoral level clinical scientists who have a thorough grounding in research and scholarly activities, who can develop and utilize scientific knowledge, who are skilled in using their critical thinking in problem formulation and solution generation, and who have a thoroughly developed repertoire of professional competencies, including applied skills.

The program is structured such that students are able to complete it with a Ph.D. in hand in 5 years (four years of classes on campus, one year for the pre-doctoral internship). It is not a highly competitive program in the sense of a scramble for grades. A small number (6-7) of students are admitted each year. Once a student is admitted, every effort is made to help the student finish the program. This is not a program where students are “weeded out!”

The program emphasizes creative research and applications of psychological principles to a broad range of applied problems. The program’s scholars, faculty and students alike, make significant contributions in the areas of treatment development, outcomes research, program evaluation, training, supervision, experimental psychopathology research, clinical science and practice, and theory and philosophy of science. The program values these behaviors regardless of the setting in which they occur.

Program Social-Training Context: The Junior Colleague/Apprentice Model

Overview

Students and faculty interact closely in all aspects of the program, particularly in research
activity, but also socially. All faculty participate in the administration of the program, teaching, and training at all levels. Most also participate in clinical supervision.

As a program and a community, we are a hard working bunch, and we are also a caring bunch. We take pride in our efforts (what we do) to maintain a highly successful and collegial program. And, we also value the time and energy that goes into education and training of our graduate students. We aspire to assist students in making the transition from “student” to junior colleagues, and eventually colleagues (our colleagues). We do that within what we call a junior colleague-apprentice training model.

For a junior colleague-apprentice training model to work, students and faculty must acknowledge their own responsibility (i.e., ability to respond, or take action) and finitude. This also means that faculty and students seek out ways to learn and grow from shared experiences around common goals.

The core clinical faculty is a highly talented and productive group, and that success hasn’t come overnight. It has come from years of hands on experience with research, teaching, training, and service, and often many long hours, sleepless nights, and plain old hard work. What this means is that we think we know a thing or two about how to help you be successful now and into the future, but obviously we acknowledge our finitude and expect that you will step up and bring something to the training experience too.

The faculty does not expect that students will be able to jump right in and function at the level of a junior colleague right out of the gate, but the goal is to help you do that over time. To help you along the way, students often begin with more focal hands on apprenticeship training with a faculty member and a lab in the early years. Over time, this expands out to the point where we expect that students will be functioning at a level we reserve for junior colleagues. This model reflects values and goals of our training program, and reflects our shared commitment to positive and productive relations between faculty and graduate students. What follows is a sample of the features of this model, and the activities, conditions, or arrangements entailed therein.

Department participation, program participation, and stewardship.

1. Faculty are expected to behave in a respectful, collegial manner with one another, students, supervisees, and other staff and professionals. We acknowledge our finitude and limitations and are open to learning from one another. The faculty takes responsibility for their actions and the welfare of their students and supervisees and work to make and keep their commitments. Graduate students are expected to do the same.

2. Graduate students are encouraged to participate in decisions affecting the Department, the clinical program, their labs, and areas affecting quality of life. While students are encouraged to communicate any problems or concerns to the faculty via conversations with individual supervisors or instructors, there is a formal mechanism for student input into the program. Graduate students elect class representatives to facilitate such involvement. For instance, each class elects a class representative(s) to meet with the Director of Clinical Training on a regular basis throughout the academic year. This arrangement provides an opportunity for students to be sure that their concerns are heard and for open communication between faculty and students. On occasion, (e.g., to discuss Quals procedures, internship applications, interview weekend) the clinical faculty or the Director of Clinical Training may meet with all clinical students or smaller groups.

3. Graduate students are encouraged to participate in Departmental, program, and
University social functions (both formal and informal), and community and professional activities. Graduate students routinely participate in planning and coordinating Interview Weekend activities; regularly attend National and International professional meetings, program and lab social events, and take an active role in helping select graduate applicants and new faculty members. Others have taken leadership roles in clinical and research settings, including within professional organizations (e.g., holding office within the Student Special Interest Group of the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies, or ABCT). These and other activities reflect a shared interest in building a sense of community and in fostering relationships.

4. Graduate student input is considered whenever possible, particularly when faculty members make decisions that affect graduate student training (such as making changes in requirements, assigning office or research space, implementing new policies, making teaching and practicum assignments). Such input can be directed to individual faculty, the Director of Clinical Training, or the Chair of the Department.

5. As a community, we also value and consider our influence on those with whom we have contact. This means, in part, that we are expected to share freely, give easily, and mentor and be mentored by one another, whether that be faculty to student or student to student.

6. Graduate students are involved in faculty evaluations at several levels, including evaluating individual and classroom faculty performance.

Research activities.

1. Students are selected for admission to the graduate program on the basis of both academic excellence and their general fit with the mutual research interests of Clinical Faculty within the Clinical Program area. Though students generally maintain close working relationships with individual faculty members, they may pursue research and other scholarly interests in collaboration with any faculty in the Department and some faculty in other departments. Such collaboration is constrained, of course, by resources such as lab space, subject availability, and faculty and student time, expertise, and interests, as well as appropriate institutional approval.

2. Active collaboration between faculty and graduate students is encouraged during all steps of the research process, including data analysis and writing. Although graduate students initially will require much guidance in these areas, faculty members encourage development of students’ skills with the goal of full collaboration in all aspects of the research process and transition to a level of functioning as an independent researcher.

3. Faculty members encourage graduate students to publish and present their research, and provide opportunities for participation in faculty research projects that will lead to joint publications and presentations, or the acquisition of additional skills and expertise.

Authorship guidelines.

Graduate students and faculty members share publication and presentation credits whenever appropriate. Faculty members are encouraged to discuss their authorship practices regularly with graduate student collaborators. Faculty and students in the Department are expected to adhere to Principle 8.12 of the “Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, copied below, when determining authorship of written works and presentations. (For the complete Code of Conduct see https://www.apa.org/ethics/code/ethics-code-2017.pdf).
(a) Psychologists take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed or to which they have substantially contributed. (see also Standard 8.12b, Publication Credit.)

(b) Principal authorship and other publication credits accurately reflect the relative scientific or professional contributions of the individuals involved, regardless of their relative status. Mere possession of an institutional position, such as department chair, does not justify authorship credit. Minor contributions to the research or to the writing for publications are acknowledged appropriately, such as in footnotes or in an introductory statement.

(c) Except under exceptional circumstances, a student is listed as principal author on any multiple-authored article that is substantially based on the student's doctoral dissertation. Faculty advisors discuss publication credit with students as early as feasible and throughout the research and publication process as appropriate. (See also Standard 8.12b, Publication Credit).

Faculty/graduate student relations

1. Graduate students share joint responsibility with their advisor for their timely progress in the program. Thus, faculty members show a professional interest in graduate students’ general well-being, progress, and accomplishments. Students, in turn, are expected to take responsibility for their education and training too. To that end, faculty members provide appropriate reinforcement and constructive criticism of students' research ideas, papers, teaching activities, and so forth. Faculty members also assist graduate students in obtaining resources to support their work and in solving work-related problems at least as much as they would when assisting any other colleague.

2. Faculty members and graduate students seek one another’s input and advice when appropriate, and seek out and receive constructive feedback so as to better themselves, the program, and the department as a whole. Faculty members and graduate students are respectful of one another’s time, opinions, professional questions, suggestions, and so forth, and are courteous toward each other. Faculty members strive to be as accessible to graduate students for consultations as they would be for their faculty colleagues. Faculty members strive to minimize interruptions during meetings with students.

3. Within the limits of time and other resources, graduate students are free to select faculty members to serve as advisers and on their IRP, thesis, and dissertation committees. These selections are, of course, also with the faculty members' consent and within the constraints of University and Department guidelines.

4. Faculty members treat graduate students as colleagues in social situations. For example, faculty members introduce students to colleagues and interact with students at social functions and professional meetings.

Caveats about the Junior Colleague-Apprentice Model.

1. Graduate students receive advice and direction from their adviser and other faculty members concerning courses, research and teaching experiences, progress in the program, and service opportunities. Yet, graduate students must assume a level of responsibility for decisions regarding their education, behavior, progress in the program, and overall training goals. The model works well when all hold to it.
2. Graduate students and faculty members need not be “friends” in order to be colleagues. Faculty members also are not expected to serve as personal counselors for graduate students.

3. Although graduate students are junior colleagues, they also are students, and therefore faculty members are responsible for evaluating and making decisions about graduate student performance. Students should consult with their advisor and the DCT regarding courses, research, clinical, or other professional activities that may impact their education and training.

4. Students will vary in their ability to behave within the core features of the Junior Colleague model. For instance, the ability to collaborate actively and meaningfully with research conceptualization, design, and writing for publication often takes time to develop. The same is true regarding the development of clinical skills and clinical effectiveness in practicum settings. As such, students should aspire to greater levels of involvement, and seek out feedback and opportunities to develop such skills from faculty (and even peers) and their supervisors. Clinical students should, however, be capable of demonstrating the social and work-related behaviors necessary to promote a collegial and productive work environment from Day 1 (e.g., being organized, punctual, making and keeping commitments).

Your graduate education will hinge on what you make of it. In a way, your training is more like a journey than a destination. When you care about the process along the way, the outcomes will take care of themselves. The faculty is a good source for guidance, but there is no substitute for your willingness to step up to the plate, show up, and take action in ways that are vital for you, your lab, your clients, and the program and department. You can be a minimalist or a maximalist in what you do. The choice is up to you.

Overview of Training Structure and Major Hurdles

First year
This is the most demanding year for course work, which will probably require much of your time. It is important to remember that nobody is here to fail you. As long as you adequately complete the requirements of a course, you will make it through. Hints for getting through “first year” are discussed later.

IRP
This is a research competency project, which must be completed by the end of the summer after the second year, and before the start of classes of the third year. Although you will register for it only in the first year, the majority of the work may be done in the second year (and perhaps earlier than that). The IRP is completed with the guidance of your research supervisor. Please consult with faculty regarding their willingness to supervise the Initial Research Project. Once an agreement has been obtained, the student is to notify the Graduate Director by submitting the IRP Advisor Notification form. Students must complete and submit this form with the Graduate Director by the end of the first semester of graduate study (see Psychology Department Forms).

Qualifying exams (Quals)
These are written examinations consisting of an oral presentation of a clinical case and a research portfolio.
**Dissertation**

The doctoral dissertation is typically the major focus of a student’s efforts during the fourth year. Yet, don’t put off starting on your dissertation (e.g., topic, methods, and proposal) until after you finish the qualifying exams. In fact, you can begin thinking and planning for your dissertation as soon as you wish. However, you just can’t formally propose the project and start it until you’ve met the criteria noted below (see dissertation timing section below) and have your request approved by the clinical faculty.

**APA-approved pre-doctoral internship**

Students usually undertake an APA-approved pre-doctoral internship during the fifth year. Yet, don’t wait until your fourth year to start thinking about it. You ought to become familiar with internship process and what information you’ll be asked to provide well before you launch into the fourth year of the program. A good place to start is the Association for Predoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) website: [http://www.appic.org/](http://www.appic.org/). It is strongly recommended that you keep a rough log of your clinical activities, in and outside your lab, starting day 1 of the program.

**Mid and end-of-year evaluations**

All students are evaluated at the mid-year point, and more formally at the end of each academic year by the entire clinical faculty. Such evaluations cover your academic progress, research performance, clinical skills, and overall professional development. With end-of-year evaluations, students are provided with written formal feedback in each of the above areas (i.e., outstanding, satisfactory, or deficient and requiring specific remediation) and students must arrange a meeting with their faculty advisor to discuss the end-of-year evaluation. Students are also encouraged to meet individually with their mentor/advisor to discuss their overall progress within the program on a more regular basis throughout the academic year.

**Remediation**

In the event that a serious deficiency in a student’s performance is noted (e.g., failure to meet minimum level of competency in implementing interventions), the student will be informed in writing. A written remediation plan will be designed for the student with specific criteria and deadlines that the student must satisfactorily meet to continue in the program.

**Grounds for termination**

Our goal is for students to leave the program by graduating rather than by termination. Occasionally, remediation and corrective actions will not result in the desired outcome, and a student will have to be involuntarily terminated. This is an extremely rare event, but it is necessary to outline the grounds for termination.

**Grounds for termination after remediation has been unsuccessful:**
1. Failure to obtain a B average on course work
2. Failure to meet clinical skills competences for the student’s level of training
3. Evidence of unethical behavior
4. Two failures to obtain a passing score on the Oral Case Presentation Quals Exam
5. Two failures to obtain a passing score on the Research component of the Quals Exam

**Grievance Procedure.** Students who wish to appeal a negative decision should follow the College of Arts and Sciences Grievance Procedures at [CAS Procedure](#) and the Graduate Council Procedure at [Graduate Council Procedure](#).
Navigating Your First Year in the Program

Arriving in Albany
There will be two orientation meetings shortly after the semester begins, but you will want to get settled in your living quarters before then and spend some time getting familiar with the location of offices on the campus and in the department.

Housing
Relatively speaking, housing costs are reasonable in Albany. An average 1-bedroom apartment goes for at least $800+ per month. There are several options for housing:

1. *Apartment complexes.* Many students rent apartments in the various two-story apartment complexes in the Albany area.

2. *Off-campus housing.* Many landlords rent out houses and floors of houses to students. The best places to find out about these apartments are through the Albany Times Union (Albany's daily newspaper), The Metroland, (Albany's weekly entertainment paper), Renter’s Guide (http://www.rentersguidealbany.com), and the student housing postings in the Campus Center. Note that the Albany Times Union posts classified ads for housing on their web page: http://www.timesunion.com. There is an off-campus housing office at SUNY and they can provide a listing of apartments as well as names of students looking for a roommate.

3. *Freedom quad.* This is the graduate students’ residence on campus. Some students have lived here in the past, however it is typically not the first option for housing among graduate students in the clinical area.

4. *Empire commons.* A second (relatively new) graduate/undergraduate student residence on campus.

Most students end up living off campus. Perhaps the best thing to do is to contact other students and ask their advice about the best areas in which to live. When looking for housing, pick up a map of Albany and have another student describe to you some of the areas. Continuing students can be very helpful to incoming students.

To find the best apartments, it is probably best to visit Albany for a few days early in the summer. A car will make it easier to get around as you visit apartments. In most cases, incoming students may stay with other students when they are looking for apartments. The closer you wait until the end of the summer, the more competition you will have for apartments.

Faculty offices
Dr. Hazel M. Prelow is the Director of Clinical Training (DCT). She handles all administrative aspects of the clinical program. Her office is located in room 393 on the 3rd floor of the Social Sciences building. Her phone number is (518) 442-5805 and her email address is hmprelow@albany.edu. The Chair of the Department of Psychology is Leslie Halpern. Her office is in Social Sciences Room 399. Her phone number is (518) 442-4849. Other Clinical faculty members also have offices in the Social Science Building, which houses the Psychology Department. Most (but not all) faculty offices and the main office (SS 399) for the Psychology Department are located on the 3rd floor of the Social Sciences Building.
Clinical faculty offices and phone numbers are as follows:

- Dr. Drew Anderson       SS 311   (518) 442-4835
- Dr. James Boswell       SS 307   (518) 442-3402
- Dr. Kristin Christodulu 1535 Western Ave (518) 442-5132
- Dr. Mitchell Earleywine SS 221   (518) 442-4836
- Dr. John Forsyth        SS 315   (518) 442-4862
- Dr. Elana Gordis        SS 235
- Dr. Leslie Halpern      SS 309   (518) 442-4840
- Dr. Julie Hormes        SS 313   (518) 442-4911
- Dr. Betty Lin           SS 381
- Dr. Hazel Prelow        SS 393   (518) 442-5805
- Dr. Elga Wulfert        AS217   (518) 442-4825

Mailroom

Next to SS 399 is the faculty and graduate student mailroom. The Department mailing address is: University at Albany, Department of Psychology, Social Sciences 399, 1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12222. Check your mailbox regularly. You probably will have some mail waiting for you by the time you arrive on campus.

Director of Graduate Training

The Graduate Director will advise you regarding registration as necessary. When you arrive, contact your assistantship supervisor and/or your mentor at your convenience. Start contacting students, too! You will probably have lots of questions, and advanced students will be eager to answer them. Also, ask which of the students in your class have already arrived. Get together as a group. Adjusting to being in a new place seems to be easier when it is done with others.

Registration

Dr. Prelow or the Graduate Director will tell you which courses you need to take, and by mid-August Cathy Krug will have put things in place for you to register. Both Dr. Prelow and the Graduate Director hold separate orientation meetings during the first week or so of the Fall semester. The Director of Graduate Studies will send you information regarding registration sometime in August. You will also need to have a student Photo ID (SUNYCard) made. The SUNYCard office is located on the lower level of the Campus Center.

Parking Permits

Parking permits may be purchased at the Office of Parking and Mass Transit Services (http://www.albany.edu/pmts/). The fines for unauthorized parking are quite steep. You should not park on campus, except in the visitors pay lot, until you have your parking permit. A parking permit will allow you to park in designated student parking areas, or in spaces clearly identified as “Open Parking.”

Student Resources

University at Albany offers a number of resources to graduate students (see http://www.albany.edu/gradstudies/resources.php and http://www.albany.edu/current.php). Some relevant services are listed below:
1. The Institute for Teaching, Learning, and Academic Leadership provides teaching resources for graduate students (Institute for Teaching, Learning, and Academic Leadership).

2. Student Academic Resources (Student Academic Resources)

3. The Disability Resource Center (Disability Resource Center) assists students with disabilities.

4. The Student Financial Center provides assistance in matters related to financial aid and accounts (Student Financial Center).

5. The University Health Center (University Health Center) provides medical services.

6. Counseling and Psychological Services Center (https://www.albany.edu/counseling_center/)

7. The Graduate Student Association is a governance body for graduate provides advocacy and services/resources to its constituency (https://www.albany.edu/gsa/).

8. The Car Sharing program (Car Sharing Program) allows students to drive a car by the hour or day.

9. Career Services (Career Services)

10. Ombudsman Office (Ombudsman) helps students to resolve complaints they may have with professors, departments, policies, etc.

11. Students have access to unlimited transportation on Capital District Transit Authority with student ID card (CDTA).

12. The Division of Student Affairs (Division of Student Affairs)

13. The Neighborhood Life Office (Neighborhood Life) provides information about living off campus.

14. Student Care Services (Student Care Services) provides services to students struggling with stress and/or health-related issues that interfere with students’ academic and personal success.

15. International Student and Scholar Services (International Student and Scholar Services) provides a variety of services to international students.

**Hints for Making it Through First Year**

Remember that everyone makes it through first year, no matter how difficult it may seem. As long as you keep up with the work, you will make it. The key is learning how to budget your time and how to work smart.

For instance, it will be difficult (and in some cases impossible) to read every word of every assigned reading enough times to completely understand everything. The goal of this year is to get a solid basis in the areas of psychology relevant to clinical research and practice. You have the next four years (and the rest of your life) to learn everything you will ever need to know. You will be kept busy enough trying to meet more modest goals. You will become very good at juggling your time.

If you are unsure how to approach a particular course, ask the instructor or other students who have already taken the course. Students usually keep readings and other course materials. Ask
them before you spend a fortune on photocopying. Get to know some of the non-clinical students and faculty. This is the only year that you will share several classes with people from other areas. A class of six or ten clinical students can seem like a very small social network after years with the same group.

Work hard so that you can carve out moments to play hard. Remember to take some time out for fun. Albany is full of malls for those who like to shop, and has some excellent clubs, theaters, and restaurants. Talk to other students to find out where the hot spots are. Albany is accessible to many places for day trips and weekend getaways. Boston, New York, and Montreal are each two to four hours away. Woodstock, Western Massachusetts, Vermont and Saratoga Springs are all within a one-hour drive. The Adirondack mountains, Green mountains of Vermont, the Catskill mountains, and Berkshire mountains are all an easy drive. The ocean and beaches are also within a half-day drive.

Courses for Your First Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APSY 510 Intro to Exp. Design</td>
<td>APSY 511 Adv. Tech. in Exp. Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSY 604 Developmental Psyc.</td>
<td>APSY 670 Clinical Methods I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSY 640 Psychopathology</td>
<td>APSY 673 Child Clinical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSY 675A Scientist-Practitioner</td>
<td>APSY 675B Assessment Practicum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APSY 736 Research Methods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The above courses are arranged by academic semester because that is when they are typically offered. Yet, changes in the above template sometimes do occur. The goal is to end the year having taken all the above courses, regardless of semester when such courses are offered.

Students also should become familiar with the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct. The Principles can be found at http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx. These standards will be discussed and referred to in most clinical courses and it is important that you become familiar with them quickly.

Get Involved in a Research Lab and Start Thinking about your Initial Research Project (IRP)

All students are expected to be active in a research lab and must complete IRP. You ought to set aside time to think and discuss IRP ideas with your research mentor. Don’t put this off.

Assistantships

Specific requirements for assistantships vary tremendously. In general, Departmental assistantships require twenty hours of work per week. Specific requirements for a given assistantship (e.g., hours, vacations, etc.) should be discussed with your supervisor. Some assistantships are funded by faculty research grants. Wages for grant-funded assistantships are paid through the Research Foundation. Other assistantships are paid through the department (see earlier section). For departmental assistantships, students serve as teaching assistants (or function in an administrative support role) for a specific faculty member. Departmental assistantships include occasional assignments to supervise (proctor) undergraduate exams. Funding usually begins in September and lasts until May. Assistantships also may be available in the fourth year. Fourth year clinical students are eligible for clinical assistantships in community agencies.
Students are strongly encouraged, and often required, to stay in Albany during the summer months. There are several reasons for this, chief among them being that the summer provides time and opportunities to get important work done (and time for fun too) without the competing demands of taking classes. Additionally, many grant assistantships continue into the summer months, and the same is true of funding in clinical settings that require continued work with clients seeking psychological services. In most cases, an assistantship supervisor also supervises the student's IRP and dissertation, although this is not always the case. Students are free to approach other professors about switching assistantships where funding permits such a change.

**The Second Year in the Program**

### Courses for Your Second Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APSY 601 Behavioral Neuroscience</td>
<td>*APSY 603 Cognitive or *APSY 605 Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSY 672 Clinical Methods 3: Behav. Change</td>
<td>APSY 613 Multivariate Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSY 676 Practicum in College Teaching</td>
<td>APSY 671 Clinical Method 2: Psychotherapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSY 780 Child Psychotherapy</td>
<td>APSY 676B Practicum (PSC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSY 676A Practicum (PSC)</td>
<td>*APSY 780 Diversity Issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicates the course is offered alternate years

- The IRP must be completed by the end of the summer of the second year!
- You should take the Teaching practicum (usually offered in the Fall semester) if you have any plans to teach a course during the summer or academic year!
- Remember that you will need a research tool to meet the department’s requirement.

Note. The above courses are arranged by academic semester because that is when they are typically offered. Yet, changes in the above template are more likely in your second year. The goal is to end the year having taken all the above courses, regardless of semester when such courses are offered. The second year classes are more specifically focused on clinically relevant topics. The course requirements from this point on tend to involve class presentations, papers, and projects (very few exams!). Generally, the format is class discussion of the required reading.

### The Psychological Services Center

Second year practica are required of all clinical students and occurs at the Psychological Services Center (PSC), which is operated as a cooperative venture between the Clinical and the Counseling Psychology Ph.D. programs. The PSC was relocated and renovated into a state-of-the-art clinical service and training facility in 2006-2007. The PSC is located nearby the downtown campus, at the following address:

The Psychological Services Center  
299 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12206  
Telephone: (518) 442-4900  
Fax: (518) 442-4844

The PSC serves the Capital District as an outpatient clinic for a variety of mental health services. Clinical faculty members supervise students the PSC. Supervision is done via direct observation,
review of digitally recorded sessions, and case review during formal or informal meetings.

Students carry a caseload of 4 to 6 clients through the academic year. The faculty sets the adult and child clinic day in the summer prior to the start of the fall semester, with 3 or 4 clinical students assigned to each supervisor. The clinic hours are noon to 8:00 PM.

In addition to the scheduled PSC hours, the PSC director schedules several mandatory Friday morning seminars. There are also occasional mandatory Friday afternoon case conferences in the spring semester. You are expected to plan your academic, teaching, and research schedule around these Friday meetings to avoid any conflict.

You are also required to take a mandatory Child Abuse and Reporting Workshop. This workshop requirement can be met via several online courses that carry a small fee. Once you take the course, you will be asked to provide documentation to the DCT and Cathy Krug. Cathy will then add a note to your transcript indicating that you fulfilled this requirement.

The PSC is staffed by other clinical and counseling students who are involved at PSC and other community agencies as part of clinical assistantships. Due to the large numbers of students at the clinic, the “rules” governing chart procedures and room scheduling are strictly enforced.

There is a detailed PSC Policy and Procedures manual that you will be required to read and know prior to starting your training at the clinic. Learn the procedures well, and don’t forget to call the PSC daily for messages. Additional information about PSC will be provided at the beginning of the second year.

**Assistantships**

If you are interested in working with a different faculty member, the beginning of the second year (or more accurately the end of the first year) is the time to consider a change. The number of assistantship placements in any area changes from time to time, depending upon grant funding and number of students leaving for internship. First, talk to the students currently assigned to a faculty member. There are differences in number of hours expected, the responsibilities and duties involved, and the amount and type of supervision provided in the different positions. You will want to get all relevant information.

The policy for changing assistantships speaks primarily to grant supported assistantships and the mutual commitment of a given student and grant holder (mentor). Consequently, this topic will be addressed first, followed by a statement more specific to department assistantships.

Students are free to move from one mentor to another, but this move must be undertaken in a manner that facilitates students’ freedom of choice while at the same time protecting the interests of faculty members who may have commitments that must be met.

These assistantships are negotiated on a one-year basis. Neither students nor mentors should assume that an assistantship agreement will automatically be continued from year to year. Instead, student and mentor should openly discuss the topic of continuation during the Spring semester of each year, preferably by the end of February. It is important that decisions about changes be made early because they affect the availability of grant-supported assistantships to be used for recruiting students for the following year.

In the event that a student wishes to change mentors, the student must discuss this decision with his/her current mentor and arrange for a smooth transition from the current research activity to a new one. Mentors should inform a student as early as possible of their intention to terminate the student's support and/or involvement in the research activity, if that be the case. Mentors should
not accept students from other mentors until they are certain that arrangements for disengagement have been made. However, mentors are free to provide to interested students information about the availability of assistantship support in their labs. If a student is hesitant to address the issue of change with his/her mentor, the student should discuss his/her concerns with the Director of Clinical Training who will advise the student as to the proper course of action.

Students on department assistantships who wish to change research mentors should follow the steps outlined above. Those who wish to change assistantship assignments should discuss the issue with their supervisor and with the Director of Graduate Studies. Faculty who wish to terminate their role as research and/or assistantship supervisor with a student should inform the student of the decision in time to allow the students to make other arrangements.

**Summer**

Finish your IRP early in the summer of your second year, or even before that. By finish, we mean that you’ve written up the paper, allowed your mentor to read it, given yourself time to revise the manuscript based on feedback, and have a finished product that you and your mentor are happy with. If you do that, you might even be positioned to send it off to a journal for publication consideration – wouldn’t that be great!

**The Third Year in the Program**

**Courses for Your Third Year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APSY 610 History and Systems</td>
<td>*APSY 603 Cognitive or *APSY 605 Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSY 677A</td>
<td>Professional Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APSY 780 Diversity Issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates the course is offered in alternate years.*

- Complete research tool
- Take an additional seminar or elective during the year.

The third year of the program involves a required year-long community-based practicum; 677A is taken in the Fall, and 677B in the Spring. These courses consist of 12-16 hours per week in a local mental health agency. You are also required to enroll in and attend a three-hour on-campus meeting each week as part of a course titled *Ethical and Professional Issues*. Typically, the first two hours of Professional Issues is devoted to presentations and discussion of ethical, diversity, and professional issues. In the final hour, students break up in groups to meet with the faculty instructor/supervisor to discuss and receive supervision/consultation regarding clinical cases, clinical issues, or anything germane to clinical activities.

You are also expected to enroll in at least 1, advanced clinical seminar (i.e., 780’s) offered by the clinical faculty. Once you are admitted to doctoral candidacy in your fourth year (assuming all other requirements are met), you will not be able to enroll in advanced clinical seminars without incurring tuition fees. So, take advantage of this opportunity.

It is also possible to take courses in departments other than psychology. Several students have, for example, taken a course on marital and family therapy taught through the Social Work department, or advanced assessment courses through the Counseling department. Yet, be sure
that you have completed all required clinical and out-of-area courses before doing that.

It is also strongly recommended that students fulfill their graduate requirement for a research tool by the end of the first semester of the third year (if they haven't already done so). Many students have taken the course in multivariate statistics, or another advanced statistics graduate seminar, to fulfill the Tool Requirement. A course on causal modeling (SEM) is also frequently used to satisfy the Tool requirements. This skill is particularly useful for conceptualizing various phenomena in terms of their causal relationships.

**Required Third Year Practicum**

This year also provides the opportunity to gain intensive clinical experience. Unlike second year at the Psychological Services Center, all students are not placed at the same facility. Opportunities are available at a variety of inpatient, outpatient and residential facilities. In recent years, sites have included: the Stratton VAMC, Dept. of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at Albany Medical Center, Sunnyview (focus on neuropsychological testing), St. Anne, and the University Counseling Center.

The DCT and clinical faculty make every effort to accommodate students’ special interests and preferences for third year practica sites (see Section below on Choice and Selection of Third Year Practicum for information about the decision making process). Be mindful though that any decision involves at least four intersecting factors: (1) what you want by way of your own preferences for a site and your personal training needs, (2) what your student colleagues want and need, (3) consideration by the faculty of what might be best for you given your skills and interests, and (4) the needs of the program to maintain high quality training sites in the community by filling those sites with our great students (i.e., if we don’t fill a slot, we may lose the slot).

With this in mind, we strongly encourage you to be open to a breadth of clinical training opportunities by your willingness to expose yourself to new and different kinds of client presenting problems and clinical settings. This exposure will make you a more well-rounded and skillful clinician, and position you to adjust to multiple professional settings and roles.

Students are expected to spend approximately 12-16 hours weekly at their 3rd and 4th year practicum sites and are generally regarded as staff members. You should not exceed the 16 hour upper limit because doing so will interfere with your other academic, research, and scholarly obligations.

With the third year practicum, you will find that you are now assuming a fair amount of responsibility, while expanding your professional role. Your on-site supervisors will also provide numeric and written evaluations of your performance at the end of the Fall and Spring academic semesters. These evaluations will be reviewed by the DCT and discussed with the clinical faculty during mid-year and end-of-year evaluations. You ought to seek out regular and periodic feedback by your practicum supervisors and make an effort to shine in your varied roles.

**Choice and Selection of Third Year Practicum**

The third-year practicum is required in our program, and involves a clinical placement in a mental health setting within the greater capital region. During the spring of your second year, the Director of Clinical Training will ask students to indicate their preferences for a third-year practicum assignment, and every effort will be made to honor them, though this is not always possible because there are a limited number of settings.
The practicum sites include a variety of different agencies with potential for experience with inpatient and outpatient populations. Consult with the current third year students for a more comprehensive overview of the available placement sites. And, as you do that, be mindful that their experience may not be your experience at a given site. The clinical faculty will not send a student to a training site that we believe is inappropriate or sub-par. That wouldn’t be good for you or for our program.

The third year practicum requires 12-16 hours per week depending upon the agency. These hours are scheduled with the supervisors at the site. You should make an effort to schedule your practicum days on Tues and/or Thurs because this will generally give you the most flexibility regarding taking other courses of interest to you. And, you should not schedule practicum on Fridays, as this day is typically reserved for departmental colloquia and clinical meetings. In addition to the supervision at the agency, you will regularly meet in small groups with clinical faculty supervisors to present and discuss professional and clinical issues.

Below is an outline of the third-year (and 4th year “advanced”) practicum placement process. It is subject to change, based on current needs and resources, but it ought to give you a sense of what is involved from a faculty insider point of view. This information is provided so that you understand how it works and what is expected.

Overview

There is a distinction to be made between 3rd -year and Advanced practicum. Third-year practicum is required and students register for Psy677A, Psy677B (3 credits/semester) and not APSY 893 (that course is for 4th and 5th year practicum).

Advanced practicum (for 4th and 5th year students) is not required – and students may register (or not – e.g. PSC advanced assistantships) for an Advanced Practicum Course (APSY 893 / 1-3 credits, 1 is all that is needed). Due to tuition considerations students could also volunteer for an advanced practicum and not register for credits; though we do not advise doing this without credit for reasons described below.

Fourth and 5th year students who have passed qualifying exams ought to register for 1 dissertation credit (considered a full load). If you chose to do an advanced practicum, then you should also register for advanced practicum credits so that you are covered by SUNYA insurance/liability with the site. APSY 893 is set up as a variable credit load course, thus allowing you to register for 1 to 3 credit hours when on advanced practicum in your 4th and/or 5th year. You should check on the cost of tuition and fees that you may incur with APSY 893. Such costs may lead you to limit credit hours to 1 for APSY 893.

Step 1 (February-April)

The DCT works behind the scenes to locate potential practica placements and get a count of available slots. Acceptable practicum placements are those that have at least 1 licensed PhD/PsyD psychologist on staff who is willing to supervise students. There are, at times, exceptions to this rule; however, those exceptions still require that some other doctoral level licensed psychologist be willing to do supervision. This is all about quality control, and ensuring that qualified professionals in our field supervise our students. Also be mindful that a licensed doctoral level supervisor is no guarantee of quality. The clinical faculty does consider who will be supervising you so that you have a worthwhile training experience.
**Step 2 (Late February)**

The DCT circulates a list of available practicum sites and asks students to rank their preferences (1 = top choice). Some sites require interviews for consideration. Thus, to open up options the DCT may encourage you to interview at a site even though you did not rank it highly or at all. Again, this process is designed to help keep all options open. Those interviews may also provide you with useful information. Be mindful that these interviews count, so prepare yourself.

**Step 2a (Early March)**

At times, new opportunities open up, or information becomes available that leads you to re-rank your preferences. For instance, as of fall 2018, we now a new practicum site at Union College Counseling Center. Students can also apply for a funded slot at the PSC or Middle Earth for your practicum. So long as we all communicate about this in a timely way, we will be good to go.

**Step 3 (late March – April)**

With your rankings in hand, along with preferences communicated to the DCT by practica supervisors with whom you interviewed, the DCT then calls a series of meetings with the clinical faculty to review practica preferences and to make assignments.

This process goes something like this:

1. We review all student preferences, beginning with students who will be in their 3rd year in the fall (they get priority in terms of practica placements).

2. We consider student preferences in the context of each student’s training needs. For instance, some sites are weaker relative to others on some dimensions. So, if a student has not had much individual therapy experience and the faculty believes that more is needed, it wouldn’t make sense to send that student to a site with little or no opportunity for individualized therapy. The same kind of thing can play out for assessment, group therapy, or clinical work with particular populations or presenting problems. Some sites also allow more freedom and student independence (some of you might want/need that, others not), whereas other sites are more structured (some of your might want/need that, others not). We also consider other academic obligations and funding, and match between those demands and site demands. So, here the issue comes down to matching faculty assessment of training needs in the context of student preferences and site demands/opportunities. These decisions are made with the interests of the students in mind and also while considering their broader education – all in the context of open acknowledgement that we are about training students within a PhD program in clinical psychology. This process often involves quite a bit of discussion and time during meetings – in fact, it is the most intensive part of the process.

3. We then finalize recommendations for advanced practicum placements and the DCT communicates those decisions to each of you.

We say all of this to clarify that this process is not just about preferences. It is fundamentally about training. Ultimately, the clinical faculty decide as a group on advanced practicum requests, and operate from a perspective of what is best for the student in terms of their training, and then how that fits with where students would like to do an advanced practicum. Again, sometimes there is the need for tweaking, but often faculty assessment matches student preference for a site. When there is a different decision, it is because the faculty believes that the practicum site is
weak relative to where you are in your training, or will not provide you with skills and experiences to help you develop more fully as a clinical psychologist relative to where you are in your training.

**Step 4 (Late April- Early May)**

You then communicate your intention to accept a practicum placement with the site supervisor/director and simultaneously with the DCT. Please be aware that these verbal commitments are binding. So, when you say “yes,” you must mean it and follow through. This is true of any practicum, paid or unpaid.

**Scope of Advanced Practicum in the Context of Your Training & Academic Obligations**

1. **Hours.** Third-year and advanced practica involve 12-16 hours per week. The one exception here is the PSC, which is a 20-22 hour/week commitment. The PSC is considered an advanced practicum for those students funded via a PSC GA line. The program is firm on the upper limit of 16 hours max/week time commitment to a practicum site. You should not exceed that 16-hour limit, again with the exception being the PSC because it is part of a 22 hr/week paid assistantship. You may submit a written petition to the clinical faculty to waive the 16-hour upper limit on practicum hours/week. Be mindful that you ought to have a compelling rationale for doing so. Students funded via the PSC for their practicum also will need to submit a petition to the clinical faculty to undertake additional advanced practicum experiences above and beyond the PSC (a time intensive experience itself). Again, this has to do with the broader mission of our training program and our expectations that students continue to engage in other aspects of their education (e.g., research, course work).

2. **Other academic/research obligations.** The 12-16 hour/week practicum restriction has to do with balancing practical experience with other equally important academic and research activities. Practitioner or PsyD programs, as you know, emphasize the practical component. We, like most scientist-practitioner doctoral programs in clinical psychology, stress both the practical and academic/research components. The faculty fully expects advanced students to continue to be actively engaged in research and course work via taking advanced seminars, along with other scholarly activities that will help round out your training as scientist-practitioners. To do that, you need time, and this again is a reason for limiting the practicum to a max of 16 hours a week. When you exceed that, you risk not being available to engage in other activities, and this may hurt you, your development, and progress in the program.

3. **Practicum scheduling during the week.** To enable balance of practicum with other academic/research opportunities, you ought to work with your site supervisor to arrange your advanced practicum Tues and Thurs during the work week. It is understood that this may not always be possible; however, you should attempt to set your schedule on these days. Tues and Thurs do not conflict with advanced clinical seminars, colloquia, or ad hoc clinical meetings, and the like.

**Dissertation Timing**

The dissertation is a requirement and a significant milestone in your academic training. It is also time intensive, and requires careful planning. Most clinical faculty strongly recommend that you have your dissertation idea worked out by the end of your third year, and ideally before the start
of your fourth year, including perhaps some writing done on your proposal. To help facilitate progress with dissertation research, the clinical faculty met and reviewed the timing of dissertation research relative to other important program requirements and milestones, including course work, ongoing research activities, clinical practica, the IRP, qualifying exams, and pre-doctoral internship. The outcome of this review was a retooling of when you may begin the process of work on your dissertation.

Students may begin formal work on their dissertation research prior to the qualifying exam, and may do so if the student meets all eligibility criteria outlined below. By work, we mean writing and consultation, formulating a committee, writing and oral defense of the dissertation proposal, seeking IRB approval, and data collection and analyses. Please note this policy does not alter university or department requirements regarding the dissertation itself (e.g., proposal meeting) or requirements pertaining to formal advancement to candidacy. Per university guidelines, students may not defend their dissertation until they have been admitted to candidacy and have been registered for dissertation credit for at least 1 full academic semester. The clinical faculty may, for whatever reason, recommend that a student not be allowed to begin the dissertation process.

Students may begin the dissertation process between the second and fourth year, provided that they meet all of the following criteria, including all program, departmental, and university requirements:

1. Students must have successfully completed 2 full years in the program (4 academic semesters).
2. Students must have no incompletes in required clinical and non-clinical course work in their first two years, exception being the incomplete that is carried in APSY676 A / APSY676B (PSC practicum) in the second year.
3. Students should show evidence of having completed at least two outside of area courses (e.g., cognitive basis of behavior, biological basis of behavior, developmental, social psychology) prior to the end of their second year in the program.
4. Students must successfully complete the IRP requirement prior to the start of their dissertation.
5. Students must complete the research tool requirement prior to the oral defense of the dissertation proposal.
6. Students must be in otherwise good standing in the program per departmental and university guidelines.
7. Students must request approval to begin the dissertation process. Approval may be sought at the beginning of the third year in the program. The decision does not rest with individual faculty or a student’s mentor. Approval requires documentation of 1-6 above and that the student request in writing that they wish to be granted permission to begin the dissertation process by using the Formal Request to begin the Dissertation Process Form available at Psychology Department Forms. Students should be sure to indicate a plan for completing other required courses and advanced coursework, including advanced clinical seminars (APSY780s), in their 3rd and 4th years of the program when submitting the form.
8. The clinical faculty may, for whatever reason, recommend that a student not be allowed to begin the dissertation process prior to sitting for the qualifying exam.
Qualifying Exam (Quals)

Qualifying exams are standard practice in clinical psychology programs. The purpose of the exam is to determine whether students demonstrate sufficient competencies in clinical practice and research to attain doctoral candidacy. There are two components to the exam, an oral presentation of a case and a research portfolio.

The Initial Research Project must be completed, submitted, and approved before any part of the Qualifying Exam can be submitted. Committees will consist of the faculty advisor and two randomly selected clinical faculty members.

Description of Clinical Presentation Component: Clinical Case Study (due March 1st of 3rd year)

Students will present a clinical case from a client they treated during their practicum. This can be from a client seen at any time starting in their 2nd year practicum placement at the PSC.

Students will submit a comprehensive write-up that includes the following information based on and drawing from relevant current research literature.

- Psychosocial history
- Differential diagnoses
- Comorbid conditions
- What assessments and/or testing were conducted and why
- Overall case conceptualization
- Treatment planning

Students will submit the comprehensive write-up of the case to the committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled oral presentation meeting. At the start of the meeting, committee members will confer to decide whether the write-up is of sufficient quality to continue with the oral presentation meeting. The Committee will formulate questions that will assess competence in each of the following domains: Psychopathology, Assessment, Behavior Change/Intervention, and Ethics. Each Committee member will independently rate the student’s responses using the criteria on the Oral Presentation Rating Form (copied below) and will record the rating on the Oral Presentation Rating Form. The Chair of the Committee will collect the rating form and total and report the results to the student. Students must score at least 5 points for each competency in a domain in order to be considered to have passed that competency. To pass the Psychopathology and Behavior Change/Intervention domains, students must score 5 on 3 of the 4 competencies in that domain. To pass the Assessment domain, students must score 5 on 2 of the 3 competencies. To pass the ethics domain, students must score at least 5. To pass the oral exam, students must pass all domains. Students who fail one domain will be considered to have partially passed the exam. Students who fail 2 or more domains will be considered to have failed the exam. Since this exam assesses competencies, students will have to remediate any part of the exam that is failed over a time frame of between one month and one year as determined by the faculty. A second failure could result in dismissal from the program.
ORAL PRESENTATION RATING FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychopathology</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are expected to demonstrate the following competencies:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply concepts of normal/abnormal behavior to case diagnosis(es) and formulation</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate knowledge of relevant theories of psychopathology</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate knowledge of the biological, cognitive, developmental, and social aspects of behavior</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate knowledge of differential diagnoses and comorbid conditions</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are expected to demonstrate the following competencies:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select and apply assessment methods that draw from the best available empirical literature and that reflect the science of measurement and psychometrics. Collect relevant data using multiple sources and methods appropriate to the identified goals and questions of the assessment as well as relevant diversity characteristics of the client.</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpret assessment results following current research and professional standards and guidelines to inform case conceptualization, classification, and recommendations, while guarding against decision-making biases and while distinguishing the aspects of assessment that are subjective from those that are objective.</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate orally and in written documents the findings and implications of the assessment in an accurate and effective manner sensitive to a range of audiences</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavior Change/Intervention</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are expected to demonstrate the following competencies:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop evidence-based intervention plans specific to the service delivery goals.</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement interventions informed by the current scientific literature, assessment findings, diversity characteristics, and contextual variables.</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate the ability to apply the relevant research literature to clinical decision making.</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate intervention effectiveness, and adapt intervention goals and methods consistent with ongoing evaluation.</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethics</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are expected to demonstrate the following competencies:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the APA Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct and other relevant ethical/professional codes, laws, statutes, rules, regulations</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Oral Presentation Rating Form Rating Key:

1 = Expectations Unmet– The student did not understand this or do well in this area. The student failed to demonstrate minimal adequate competency.

2 = Meets Expectations– The student adequately performed. However, there are some areas in need of improvement.

3 = Exceeds Expectations– The student excelled in this area. He/she understood it and was highly proficient.

Description of Research Portfolio

The research portfolio will be comprised of the following (due May 1st of 3rd year).

- Research Statement (students can use one of the models out there for faculty research statements)
- 1st authored conference presentation
- Meta analysis or qualitative review

It is strongly suggested that by the start of classes of the third year that the student provide the committee with an outline of the paper for approval of the entire committee

Two content areas (i.e., affective aspects of behavior, biological aspects of behavior, cognitive aspects of behavior, developmental aspects of behavior, and social aspects of behavior) must be addressed and integrated in the paper.

Scoring:

Scored by 3 faculty members as exceed (3 points), met (2 points), unmet (1 point)

- A score of at least 5 is needed to pass
- Students will be notified of their score by June 30th
- Students who fail must remediate
- Students who do not achieve a passing score will have the opportunity to revise the paper over a time frame of between one month and one year as determined by the faculty
- A second failure could result in dismissal from the program

The Fourth Year in the Program

By the beginning of fourth year your qualifying exams should be over, and it is time to consider the year ahead. On paper this appears to be an easy year for several reasons. First, the major hurdle of qualifying exams has been completed and the course work is minimal. Yet, watch that you aren’t lulled into complacency.

It is extremely important that you get a head start on the tasks you must complete during fourth year in order to be able to finish these tasks. If you don’t finish these tasks your life during internship year will be greatly complicated and you may not be ready to accept your first professional position (and get paid) after you finish your internship.

Courses

While not required, you are encouraged to take advanced clinical seminars during the fourth year (particularly in the second semester) in order to leave yourself plenty of time to complete other
tasks outlined below. Of course you are free to take other seminars or to otherwise get acquainted with some areas that you have not managed to delve into thus far. There will be tuition costs linked with additional courses beyond the 1 credit hour for dissertation load, particularly once you have been formally admitted to Candidacy. These fees may be reduced depending your source of funding in your fourth year.

Remember, this is your last chance for structured and low cost exposure to substantive areas of psychology. After you've finished internship, the only opportunities will be various continuing education efforts, some of which will cost you dearly (on the other hand, you'll be rich by then so maybe it will be a fair trade off), or post-doctoral training.

**Internship Applications**

The first task with a deadline is this: deciding which internships to which you wish to apply. Around the 2nd week of September, the DCT will schedule a meeting to explain the ins and outs of applying to internship. Students in the past have found this meeting extremely useful, and you should attend if at all possible or get notes from your classmates.

Information regarding various internships is on file in the Clinical Director's office, as is a copy of the most recent APPIC Directory (see also [http://www.appic.org/](http://www.appic.org/)). Some students have found it helpful to purchase their own copy of the APPIC Directory. Information regarding its purchase is provided in each year’s directory.

Internship applications have been moved up in time during each of the past several years and most now require completed applications between late October. All internship applications and supporting materials are processed online. Therefore, it is essential to begin this process early because your application will require several essays, details of your clinical work, transcripts, and letters of recommendation, all of which take time to prepare in order to meet a October 31st deadline.

**Dissertations**

The overriding goal of the fourth year is to initiate (if you have not done so already) and (it is hoped) complete your dissertation. Unfortunately, and for a variety of reasons, very few students seem to accomplish this goal. The ones that do are forever thankful and grateful that they were able to complete it.

**Advanced Fourth Year Clinical Practica**

An increasing number of students are choosing to do advanced practica in their fourth year. These are arranged by students in consultation with the Director of Clinical Training and may be located in any one of a number of community or clinical agencies within or outside of the University.

Students often take advantage of this opportunity to round out their clinical experience and gain some exposure to clinical populations that they have not encountered. Remember, once again, this is your last chance for structured supervised and “free” training (unless you carry on with postdoctoral training). Nevertheless, whether you wish to take advantage of this will depend on your own career plans and personal preferences.
The Fifth Year in the Program

APA-Approved Pre-Doctoral Internship

The date when you start your internship will sneak up on you very quickly. The two most common start dates are July 1st and September 1st. If you have at least finished collecting your dissertation data, then you’ll likely experience relief and hopeful anticipation at the prospects of starting internship. If you haven’t progressed with your dissertation to the point of finishing the data collection, then you’ll be frantically trying to do as much as you can, and wondering how you can get back on weekends, etc. to continue with the process. This will also tend to pull you out of potentially new and vital internship experiences unnecessarily. Leave plenty of time for this and other “finishing up” duties so that the last few weeks are not frantic for you and others with whom you may be involved.

Remember that you must continue to be registered at the University at Albany for internship credit. Enroll in APSY 895 each semester (1 cr. hour). It is easy enough to register for the first semester of internship during the early registration period in the spring of your fourth year. For second semester, you can register by phone. Call the Assistant to the Chair in the department office to obtain the appropriate information for doing so.

Continuous registration during your internship year is a prerequisite to awarding of the Ph.D. You do not, however, have to register during the summer while on internship. If you are also planning to defend your dissertation before or after internship, and have been admitted to doctoral candidacy, you must be registered for at least one credit of APSY 899 (Doctoral Dissertation). In fact, 1 credit hour is all you need. If you defend your dissertation while on internship, one hour of internship registration per semester is sufficient to maintain active status.

The internship must be successfully completed before the Ph.D. can be granted. Ideally, you’d like to position yourself to be ABI (all but internship), and not ABD (all but dissertation). Although the internship agency may certify the completion of the internship from its perspective, the formal acknowledgement of the successful completion of this program requirement must come from the clinical faculty either in the form of a letter from the Director of Clinical Training or the awarding of the grade of “S” for each of the two pre-doctoral internship semesters. This grade change is awarded following receipt of a letter from your internship director stating that you have satisfactorily completed your pre-doctoral internship.

Oral Defense of Your Dissertation

At some point, we hope sooner rather than later, you will be ready to defend your dissertation. Your advisor will fill you in on all of the details but usually by this time the pressure is off. Although students continue to be a bit anxious about defending their dissertation, remember nobody knows more about the topic than you. And, though technically speaking any question in psychology can be asked during an oral defense, the reality is that most questions tend to focus on theoretical and empirical issues relevant to your dissertation.

During the oral defense you will be viewed as a colleague (not junior, not a student) and you are expected to present and defend your ideas as appropriate. Though you should include feedback from your dissertation committee and chair, there is room for you to adopt a style and approach that you are comfortable with. Keep in mind, however, that your Chair will normally outline the nature and structure of the defense meeting (e.g., length of presentation, how questions/comments will be handled and in what order), and you should discuss the structure and format of the oral defense with your advisor well in advance of the defense meeting.
Despite all the emotional hyperbole leading up to the dissertation defense, the defense itself usually turns out to be a fun learning experience where you can really discuss all of the hard work you have been doing on your dissertation over the past year or more and the implications of your work.

Also, be sure to remember to bring the dissertation signature sheet to your defense so that your advisor and committee members can sign the transmittal sheet on the spot. This transmittal sheet can then be forwarded directly through channels to the Graduate School. The Graduate Office on campus can provide you with a sheet detailing procedural matters for transmitting the dissertation, including number of copies to order, etc. In any case, congratulations, you have earned your Ph.D., and the right to be called Doctor, the minute your committee informs you that you have passed.

Per University guidelines, you cannot defend your dissertation research until you have been admitted to Doctoral Candidacy and remain so for at least 1 academic semester. In terms of planning, do not consider proposing and subsequently defending your dissertation in the same academic semester (this will be difficult anyway given drafts and revisions of the proposal and dissertation, and availability of committee members for oral defense meetings).

**Graduation**

Congratulations! You did it. Depending on when you defend your dissertation, you will be invited to the next graduation ceremony where you will be “hooded” by your advisor. This is a ceremony dating back almost 900 years, and it is really a very pleasant and fitting end to your graduate years. Many students are unable to attend since they have taken positions elsewhere around the country. But if it is at all possible, make every attempt to attend and to invite your family and friends. You will be well rewarded. More specifically, you will proceed to the staging area where the appropriate university officials will hand you your doctoral degree and at that point the doctoral hood (which actually looks like a long cape in University at Albany colors) will be placed on your shoulders by your advisor. Be sure to let your advisor know if you plan to attend graduation so that s/he can plan to be there too.

You will automatically receive notification of your impending graduation when you become eligible. At that time, you must inform the Graduate School whether you will be attending. Provision also will be included in this notification for informing your advisor to attend if at all possible. If your advisor is out of town, some other member of your committee or the faculty will do the hooping.