

Doctoral Degree Requirements and Guidelines in Social Psychology

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Graduate School Requirements

This document describes requirements and guidelines specific to the Social Graduate Training Program. There are also very specific requirements of the Graduate School that must be fulfilled by certain deadlines. Always refer to their website for guidelines, forms, and deadlines:

www.colorado.edu/GraduateSchool

*****NOTE: There were multiple changes made to program requirements in Summer 2024. All students beginning the program in Fall 2024 or after will follow these requirements. Any student beginning the program BEFORE Fall 2024 may choose to follow these requirements or may follow the requirements in effect when they began their PhD program (last edited 2018: [social-program-requirements2018.pdf](#)).**

Overview of Requirements

- ___ 34 hours of course work (5000-level or above).
- ___ 30 hours of dissertation work supervised by social faculty.
- ___ First-year project with social faculty, and participation in mini-convention.
- ___ Second-year project with social faculty (Master's Thesis).
- ___ Comprehensive examination (2 components: General & QRP (Qualifying Research Product))
- ___ Dissertation prospectus and oral defense
- ___ Dissertation and oral defense
- ___ Teaching (at least one semester as a teaching assistant)
- ___ Completion of all requirements in 6 years.
- ___ Establish Colorado residency in 1st year (for U.S. citizens).

Course Work

All courses must be completed with a grade of B- or better to obtain credit. 30 of these hours must be completed before you receive your master's degree. No less than 5 credit hours (including dissertation hours, see below) is considered a full load for graduate students. A student may not enroll in more than 15 credit hours in any semester. Required courses are:

Required Courses Credit Hours	Credit Hours
Statistics (5741/5751 year-long)	8
Social Theory Proseminar (5606, two semesters)	6
Social Research Methods (5656, one semester)	3
Additional Quantitative or Methods Course (one semester)	3
Professional Development Seminar (ProDev; 6606, 1 hr./semester x 3 yrs.)	6
4 Advanced Seminars, consisting of 3 theory-based 7536 Social Psychology	9+

seminars and 1 substantive seminar or proseminar outside of social psychology (must be approved by Program Director if course is outside the department).	
Total	35+

Doctoral Dissertation Hours

There are many graduate school rules around dissertation hours. Please attend to them closely.

Doctoral Dissertation Credit Hour Requirements: To complete the requirements for the Ph.D. a student must register for a minimum of 30 dissertation credit hours. A student may not register for more than 10 dissertation credit hours in any one semester, including summer, and must enroll in at least 5 credits each semester post-comps, including the semester that a student completes their comps.

Continuous Registration Requirement: A Ph.D. student is required to register continuously as a full-time student, for a minimum of five dissertation hours in the fall and spring semesters of each year, beginning with the semester following the passing of the comprehensive examination and extending through the semester in which the dissertation is successfully defended (final examination).

An example: To meet these requirements, you might start registering for 3-4 dissertation hours in the spring of your second year, then take 5 each semester in years 3-5. Assuming you complete your comprehensive exam in fall of year 4 (so that you are done with both general and specialty exams), this will give you more than the 30 dissertation units you need and will make sure you meet the continuous enrollment requirement.

Note on Forms: Detailed descriptions of the remaining degree requirements are provided next. ** indicates that you must meet a deadline for submitting a form to the Graduate School. All forms and deadlines can be found on the departmental resources page at

<http://www.colorado.edu/psych-neuro/graduate-programs/resources-current-graduate-students>

First Year Project

You will conduct research in your first year that culminates with (1) a presentation in ProDev at the end of spring semester, (2) a presentation in the department's mini-convention at the end of the spring semester, and (3) a paper.

The paper is read by your advisor and one additional social psychology faculty member, selected in consultation with your advisor. You should have the readers sign the *First Year Project Form*, available from the Social Graduate Program Assistant. The completed form and a final copy of your report are given to the Social Graduate Program Assistant for your file.

The faculty organizer of ProDev will schedule you to present. Look for emails from department organizers in the spring semester to submit an abstract for mini-convention.

Second Year Project (Master's Thesis)

There are three second-year project requirements.

Proposal

Before starting your second-year project you will present your proposed research to your advisor and at least one additional faculty member in social psychology. This will optimally occur as a presentation of your proposed study in ProDev in the fall of your second year (which would also satisfy the class requirement for PSYC 6606 of presenting in each year). However, if the timeline of your project requires it, you can also receive feedback in a lab meeting at which both your advisor and at least one additional social area faculty member are in attendance. Note that for either presentations in ProDev or lab meetings, additional faculty and/or grad students are likely to be in attendance, resulting in your receiving a breadth of feedback about your proposed project. Feedback from two faculty members is the minimum; the opportunity for feedback from a broader audience is even more beneficial.

After your presentation, complete the *Second Year Project Proposal Form*, available from the Social Graduate Program Assistant, indicate the presentation date and all who were present (faculty and non-faculty) and obtain the signature of your advisor and the designated second faculty member approver.

It is important to note that although you are required to get feedback for the proposal, your completed thesis can deviate from the proposal at the discretion of your advisor. That is, you are not bound to report the proposed research in your final thesis. The purpose of presenting your proposed research is to provide experience in conceptualizing and discussing research, and the opportunity to receive formal feedback from program members, but if other research you subsequently conduct is more appropriate for the project, this may be reported instead.

Written Thesis

The second-year project is to be reported in a written thesis in APA Style, which must be approved by December 1 of your third year. You will select two readers for your thesis (your advisor and one additional social psychology faculty, with the second person usually being

someone present during your proposal presentation). After they approve the thesis and the appropriate form is filed – which includes the signature of a third faculty member (see below), the Graduate School will confer the Master's degree. Note that your thesis does not need to be typed in the Graduate School format. You will give a copy of the final thesis to the Social Graduate Program Assistant for your file, but you do not need to send a copy to the Graduate School.

In the semester in which you will submit your written thesis, you need to file a *Candidacy Application for an Advanced Degree*** (check the space for M.A.) and an *Application for Diploma card*** with the Graduate School, early in the semester. Students in the social psychology program enroll for Plan II – non-thesis with final exam. Do not sign up for master's thesis hours. You may instead sign up for Independent Study hours if necessary, but students typically only take dissertation hours during graduate training.

Near the end of the semester, you will file the *Master's Degree Examination or Project Report*** You will need to have a third faculty member sign this form so that there are three faculty total who have approved your Master's work. Prior to receiving your master's degree, you must have completed 30 hours of coursework. *Please note that Graduate School requires that all work associated with the master's thesis, including filing of forms with the Graduate School, be completed within 4 years from the date course work is started.*

Oral Presentation of Final Thesis

The final component of your second-year project is to orally present your second-year research in ProDev in the fall semester of your third year.

Comprehensive Examination (3rd and 4th Year)

You will complete your Comprehensive Examination in your third and fourth years. You may take up to, but no more than 10 hours of dissertation work by the time you complete the entire Comprehensive Examination.

There are two sections of the Examination: General and Qualifying Research Project (QRP). The General Exam is taken after the end of the spring semester of your third year. You must have completed your second-year project/Master's project in order to initiate The General Exam part of Comps. The QRP is to be completed by December 1 of your fourth year (though the requirements for this part of Comps can be completed at ANY TIME after you begin your PhD program).

Early in the spring semester of your third year, it is wise to submit to the Graduate School a *Candidacy Application for Advanced Degree*** (Check the PhD space this time). You will also

need to submit the *Doctoral Examination Report*** to the Graduate School for approval of your exam committee. Both forms are due at least two weeks prior to the completion of both sections of your Comprehensive Examination.

Once you have passed both parts of the Comprehensive Exam, all five members of your QRP Committee will sign the *Doctoral Examination Report***, given to the Social Graduate Program Assistant for proper routing.

General Exam

The goal of the General Exam is to ensure students have a breadth of knowledge of methodological and theoretical issues in social psychology. It is take-home and consists of two questions to be answered in one week from the following 2 areas:

- General breadth, addressing comprehensive issues across social psychology (1 question)
- Methodological issues (1 question)

A faculty member in the program will take responsibility for organizing, administering, and grading the exam. You will be given multiple possible questions for each area of the exam and will select the question you wish to answer from each section. Each answer will be 8-10 double-spaced pages, not including references/tables. You will turn your two answers in to the organizing faculty member who will distribute each answer to two program faculty for grading. The possible grades on each question are *High Pass*, *Pass*, or *Rewrite*. If you receive any grades of *Rewrite*, you will be given feedback on your answer and will have 48 hours to rewrite your answer/s and resubmit to the organizing faculty member, with the same two faculty members evaluating your rewrite. On a re-write, grading options consist only of *Pass* or *Fail*.

In order to pass the overall exam and remain in good standing in the program you must receive grades of at least *Pass* on both questions after any re-grades of re-written answers.

Students wishing to take the General Exam during a specific year need to notify the Social Program Director by April 1 of that year, with the exam administered during May.

Qualifying Research Products (QRP)

The second section of the Comprehensive Examination is focused on your specific interests within the field. A QRP Committee will be formed for this part of the Exam. The Committee will comprise five members: the Chair is your advisor, two additional faculty will be your readers (at least one from the Social Program), and the other two members will be Social Program faculty who will sign the graduate school form. All committee members may be Social Program faculty.

If greater breadth is deemed desirable, one of the readers may be from outside the Program/Department if the committee chair agrees to this arrangement.

The goal of the specialty exam is to gain experience with research products relevant to the field of social psychology, to learn and utilize critical analysis skills and to develop a deep understanding of a particular research area. Working with your Chair, you will select one of the following three options to complete in order to fulfill the requirements of the QRP component:

1. A full Dissertation Research Grant or Postdoctoral Research Grant (e.g., NIH R36, NIH F32, NSF Postdoc Grant, equivalent foundation grant).
2. A general theoretical paper, review paper, systematic review, or meta-analysis covering the literature in a subfield agreed upon between you and your advisor/QRP committee, using a Psychological Bulletin or Psychological Review article as a model for the written product.
3. 2 submitted first-author empirical papers (or, with approval of your QRP committee, 1 larger multi-study paper). These papers may have been submitted at any point in your enrollment in the social psychology program.

This requirement should be completed by December 1 of your fourth year in the program. HOWEVER, you can complete this requirement any time before then as well. For example, if you submit one first-author paper in your second year and one first-author paper in your third year, you may submit those two papers in fulfillment of the QRP requirement.

Once you have passed both parts of the Comprehensive Exam, all five members of your Specialty Exam Committee will sign the *Doctoral Examination Report***, given to the Social Program Secretary Graduate Program Assistant for proper routing.

Dissertation Prospectus (4th Year)

A written prospectus consisting of an introduction, methods, and an outline of analyses will be submitted to your committee ideally before the end of your fourth year in the program and defended orally to the committee. The dissertation committee will consist of 5 members and must include: the advisor (from the Social Program), one psychology faculty member from outside social psychology, and one faculty member from outside the psychology department. The remaining 2 members can be from any program. Any committee configuration that deviates from this arrangement must be approved in writing by the full social psychology faculty. Once committee approval of the prospectus has been obtained, the student should have the members sign the *Approval of Dissertation Proposal Form*, available from the Social Graduate Program Assistant.

Dissertation (4th & 5th Years)

You will complete your dissertation research and then write your full dissertation. Once you receive approval from your advisor you will work with your committee to schedule an oral dissertation defense. You should send your completed dissertation to all committee members 1-2 weeks prior to your defense. A *Doctoral Examination Report*** must be turned into the Graduate School. The form must be submitted to the Graduate School once a date for your oral defense has been set and no later than two weeks prior to the defense—so your committee can be approved. This form should be given to the Social Graduate Program Assistant for proper routing. (You should also pick up the Ph.D. graduation packet from the Graduate School which provides a checklist of their requirements.) At the oral defense, your committee will sign the *Doctoral Examination Report*, a *Final Grade Card*** and the *Signature Page*** to be included in the final submission of your dissertation to the Graduate School. The two forms are to be given to the Social Graduate Program Assistant for proper routing.

At the time of your oral defense, you must be registered for at least 5 dissertation hours. The dissertation must be typed in the graduate school format, and one copy will be kept on file at the library.

Please note that Doctoral students are expected to complete all degree requirements within six years from the date they start course work in the program. In addition to this being a Graduate School requirement, keep in mind that departmental teaching and faculty sponsored research assistantships are generally not offered after the fifth year (students pursuing an additional major, such as the Neuroscience additional major, typically receive a sixth year of support).

Other Program Guidelines

Extensions to Deadlines

If you find that you need a short extension to any of the deadlines mentioned for any of the milestones that must be completed, you will need to formally request an extension. First, you must meet with your advisor to explain your situation and verify that your advisor concurs with the necessity of an extension. You will then develop a written request for an extension, briefly explain the reason for the request, and include your proposed new deadline (the exact date) by which the requirement will be completed. This request should be completed in cooperation with your advisor and then should be submitted to the Program Director, cc'ing your advisor. The Program Director will evaluate your request and give you a written response. Both your request and the Program Director's response to your request will become a part of your permanent graduate school record.

Colorado Residency Guidelines (1st Year)

At the beginning of your first year, you need to work towards establishing residence in Colorado and keep copies of documents that will prove you have established residency in Colorado. It is imperative that residency is established prior to your second year. Beginning your second year, the department will pay for your tuition only at the in-state rate and this can be done only if you can prove that you started living here in August, at the beginning of your first year. You should keep the earliest dated paperwork and continuous paperwork throughout the year as evidence of the start of your residence here. The following are ways to establish residency:

Colorado driver's license

Colorado vehicle registration

Colorado voter registration

Colorado income tax returns (copy)

Rent receipts (or ownership and permanent occupancy of residential real estate)

Keep these items in a safe place and be ready to show them to a university official one year from the beginning of your graduate study. If you do not establish residency, you will have to pay the difference in the out-of-state vs. in-state tuition yourself – which is thousands of dollars. For further information about residency status, you can call 303-492-6868, or get printed tuition classification guidelines from the Tuition Classification Office, located at Regent 105. For further details see

<http://www.colorado.edu/registrar/state-tuition/criteria-establish-residency>

Ralphie's Guide to Student Life and the Registration Handbook both have a wealth of information for new students.

Accommodations

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your advisor through the Accommodate portal so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#).

Re-Use of Work

Both because feedback is so beneficial during training and research is programmatic, it will often be appropriate to use the same or similar work in multiple contexts. Some examples include incorporating ideas from specialty comps into your dissertation prospectus, developing a research proposal in 5656 that relates to your first- or second-year projects, and workshopping a paper in a writing-focused seminar that will be used for a program requirement or manuscript. At the same time, CU's Honor Code prohibits "submitting the same or similar work for credit, including, but not limited to, homework, more than once without permission from all course faculty involved," (<https://www.colorado.edu/sccr/students/honor-code-and-student-code-conduct>). There are also times when re-purposing work will not be substantively useful. We try to explicitly note when re-use of material is likely and acceptable, but when in doubt, follow the CU policy of explicitly asking your advisor or a given committee before re-using work for multiple purposes.

Use of Generative AI

Critical analysis, clear expression of ideas, and idea generation are key components of your training. We thus generally expect all coursework and program requirements to reflect your work and be in your words. There may be contexts in which Generative AI is appropriate (e.g., in generating stimuli) but there are many limitations to Generative AI (e.g., the generation of phantom citations, perpetuation of cultural biases). Generative AI should not be used for any written work submitted for classes or program requirements, unless explicitly noted as appropriate. You should explicitly consult with program faculty before using Generative AI for any other purpose.

Annual Progress Reports

The program will annually ask you to provide a summary of your accomplishments and provide a copy of your current CV.

To supplement feedback you receive each year in coursework and research contexts, you will annually receive a written assessment of your accomplishments, recommendations for growth, and tasks for the coming year (i.e., a reminder of program requirements for the next year) from the program. In the rare occasion of a major concern or lack of progress resulting in probationary status, the letter will describe the issue and steps needed for improvement.

We invite you to have a conversation with your advisor or other faculty to fully understand the feedback. You can also respond to the letter in writing if you desire.