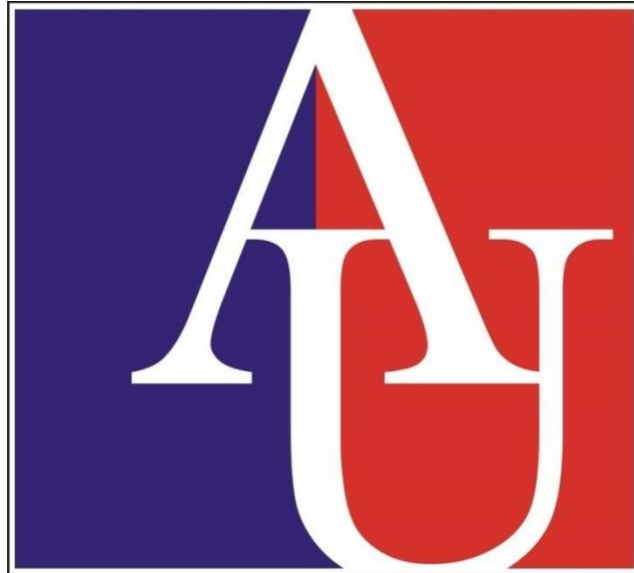


**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

CLINICAL DOCTORAL PROGRAM HANDBOOK  
2023-2024



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### *Clinical Ph.D. Program*

Our Clinical Ph.D. program has been accredited by the American Psychological Association Committee on Accreditation (CoA) since 1972, based in part on the following degree requirements. Students in this program must complete 72 credits, 2 comprehensive exams (described below), at least one full-year externship, a full-year internship, 1 tool of research, a masters thesis, and a doctoral dissertation. Students also must complete competency assessments (see “Degree Requirements” section).

Students must be in full time residence for at least three years at American University, plus one year of internship. In practice, however, the minimum time students are able to complete the program is four years of full-time residency, plus one year of internship.

#### **Overview: Typical Sequence of Progressing through the Program**

There is variability in how long the Ph.D. program takes students to complete (median, mean, and mode = 6 years including the internship year, but in the past 10 years 27% of graduates completed in 5 years, so it is possible!), and even greater variability in what exactly students do each year, as a function of individual differences in interests and backgrounds, departmental course offerings, and more. That said, it may be useful to review a prototypical route through the program as a point of comparison when devising your own plans. The remainder of this handbook gives much more detail on the individual milestones/activities listed in this table.

Notes on this table:

1. This prototypical sequence assumes a student who (a) aspires to finish in 5 years total; (b) is not transferring in any credits, nor a thesis; (c) has a balanced interest in research and clinical training.
2. “Summer” means the Summer following the Academic year for that row.
3. See “required courses” list (pp. ....) for course titles corresponding to these numbers.
4. “OTHER” means you need a course here, but there are many possibilities (stats, area requirements in which you have a choice, research credits, electives, required classes that can be taken various years.....). In completing your program of study fall semester first year you should (consulting with your advisor) look at the department chair’s projected schedule of future course offerings and figure out what would fit where, given the year of your enrollment.
5. Only AU-specific tasks/requirements that apply widely are listed in Summer. Beyond that, it depends on what opportunities emerge and interest you. For the first 3 Summers you could add “research job?” “work on research with advisor?” “summer externship?” and the ever-popular “chillax” to each row.
6. “Trimmed mean hours” refers to trimmed mean (exclude highest value and lowest value; average the others) cumulative (not for that one year only) “total clinical hours (assessment + intervention)” reported at the end of that year (May) by internship applicant cohort of 2022-23, all of whom matched in February 2023.

Year	Courses	Research	Clinical	Other	Summer
1	Fall 633, 650, 680  Spring 651, 681, OTHER	Collaborate on one project of advisor/lab. Develop thesis idea conceptually in fall, operationally (incl. IRB application) in Spring.	See patients in Y1 practicum. Trimmed mean hours = 26	Celebration of Research (p. 12)  Ethics exam completed in Y1 practicum (p. 7)	Research Assessment Evaluation (p. 12)  History and Systems comp (p. 13)  Prepare thesis project to begin data collection start of Fall Y2
2	Fall 652, 710, OTHER  Spring 711, 797, OTHER	Collect data for thesis Fall. Analyze, write, defend, revise in Spring	See patients Y2 practicum. Trimmed mean hours = 100	Apply for externship (p. 10)	Submit thesis for publication and presentation  Continue seeing Y2 prac patients
3	Fall 780 or 793, OTHER X 2  Spring 781 or 794, OTHER X 2	Collaborate on advisor/lab projects.  Dissertation proposal Fall (p. 15)  Dissertation data collection spring	See patients Y3 practicum.  Externship  Trimmed mean hours = 385	Submit dissemination tool paperwork (p. 14)  Apply for externship II (optional)  Specialty comprehensive (p. 12)	Dissertation data collection  Submit collaborative research for publication/presentation  Plan internship applications (select sites, contact references, draft essays)  Continue seeing Y3 prac patients
4	All "OTHER"s to finish requirements. One of the	Dissertation data collection – finish in Fall	Externship II  Trimmed mean	Supervision and consultation readings and reflection	Defend and revise dissertation. Start internship.  Register for 091

	two semesters, take 7 credits	Analyze, write dissertation in spring	hours = 771	Apply for internship (p. 11)	
5	Fall 091, 899  Spring 091, 899	Publish dissertation	Internship	Apply for postdocs or jobs  Apply for graduation	Register for 091

***Program Mission and Overview***

The mission of American University's doctoral program in clinical psychology is to provide students with excellent, balanced, and integrated training in research and clinical practice. Our graduates are well prepared for the practice of professional psychology, across a range of clinical and research settings.

The program is guided by a scientist-practitioner model, emphasizing the integration of science and clinical practice. The scientist-practitioner mindset is promoted through emphasis on research and empirical evidence in therapy and assessment courses, as well as breadth courses that cover discipline specific knowledge. Our training is designed to build in complexity as students navigate their training in research, clinical work, and coursework.

*Research:* In their first year in the program, students learn the fundamentals of research in PSYC 650 Psychological Research. Students show their understanding of methodology in part by completing a Research Assessment Evaluation at the end of the first year. Students also immerse themselves right away in learning research by doing research. They begin working in their labs immediately upon starting the doctoral program, with an eye toward generating ideas quickly for a master's thesis. To facilitate early progress, we host a "celebration of research" at the end of the first year, where each first-year student presents for 10-15 minutes on their research idea, background literature, and research design. We encourage students to finish their master's thesis no later than the third year of training, preferably by the end of Year 2. The dissertation project is then the culmination of the research sequence, where students are expected to have increased skill and independence in generating research ideas, designing studies, choosing measures, and analyzing and interpreting results.

*Clinical Training:* Our clinical practicum sequence begins in the first year. The practicum training is sequential and graded in complexity. The first-year practicum is an experiential, relationship building, skill-oriented practicum (e.g., reflective listening), with some preliminary introduction to psychodynamic concepts as well. First year students see clients in the AU Counseling Center, and clients are carefully screened to ensure that clients have problems that are less severe (e.g., adjustment issues, relationship problems, homesickness). In the first year, students carry only two clients so that they do not feel overwhelmed and they receive a high amount of supervision support per client. In the second year, students learn the fundamentals of Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) in our in-house James J. Gray Psychotherapy Training Clinic. For the third practicum experience, students take Advanced CBT with either adult or

child populations. The adult Advanced CBT course, which is also housed in our James J. Gray clinic, focuses on “third wave” CBT approaches, including Dialectical Behavior Therapy and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. The child Advanced CBT course, which is housed in the Clinic for Youth and Anxiety Related Disorders, trains students in cognitive behavioral theory and techniques related to anxiety and mood symptoms in youth. Students also typically begin outside externships in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years in the program. Finally, we expect a breadth of clinical training experiences, but also want students to acquire some depth in a specific disorder or population by the time they graduate. Advanced students prepare a Specialty Comprehensive presentation to illustrate their clinical knowledge of a “specialty.” This oral presentation must be grounded in the empirical literature.

*Assessment Training.* In their first year, students take PSYC 633 Psychological Assessment I. This course focuses on the fundamentals of assessment (e.g., reliability, validity, scale development) and lays a foundation of conceptual understanding of assessment before students take assessment practicum courses. In the fall of the second year, students take PSYC 652 Assessment of Intellectual Functioning and Personality, which focuses primarily on learning IQ assessments and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-3). Later (e.g., spring of the second year), students take PSYC 618 Principles of Neuropsychological Assessment.

*Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism Training.* Our program has adopted an infusion model of diversity and multicultural training, which means that multicultural and identity-related issues are addressed throughout the curriculum. We include discussions on topic of diversity in all areas of training, from classes to practicum experiences. To provide foundational learning, students are required to take PSYC 621, *Ethnic and Minority Issues in Psychology*. In addition to broad diversity training, we are committed to anti-racism training specifically, and so we will ensure there are talks and course coverage that specifically addresses anti-racism content and ways to support clients who have experienced race-based trauma. We have a Diversity and Inclusion Action Team (DIAT), which is a collaborative team of faculty and students who maintain and make available a collection of resources relevant to diversity issues. DIAT also meets regularly to brainstorm new initiatives for the program and evaluate progress toward action items. Finally, students have the opportunity to work with diverse clients through externship and practicums and are supervised in conceptualizing clinical work from a multicultural perspective. Through these experiences students are encouraged to explore their own identities and how these impact their clinical work with clients. Some students also engage in research related to diverse identities.

### ***Student Advisement and Directing Routine Questions***

Each graduate student is assigned a faculty advisor. Students’ research mentors also serve as their primary advisors in the program.

Navigating doctoral program and university requirements, as well as possibly shifting career development aspirations, is complicated, and no doubt questions will come up along the way. When you have questions, we suggest you direct them as follows:

Living in the DMV, balancing work and fun, improving your miniature golf game.....: any students or faculty with whom you have rapport.

Career goals, research plans: your advisor, (Director of Clinical Training [DCT] as a backup)

Program/university requirements, procedures, paperwork, course registration...: Check this handbook and any relevant AU websites to see if the question is clearly answered. If not, try (in order) your advisor, then (if necessary) the DCT. Please do NOT ask staff in the college Dean's office your question unless the DCT has first whiffed on the question and requested that you do so. You are also discouraged from seeking guidance on these issues from other students, as their experiences may have been unique to something about their circumstances that you do not know, or may have predated some rules change.

Anything to do with a teaching assistantship: Your supervisor in that role, then (if needed) the department chair, Dr. David Kearns.

Anything to do with externship: Director of Externships Dr. Erica Hart.

Mental health concerns: any faculty member. Also, the associate DCT Dr. Hart maintains and periodically distributes a list of local mental health care providers available to work with students.

A student may change research advisors at any time, provided the student receives a commitment from another faculty member who is willing to advise the student. At the start of the degree program, the faculty advisor and student should meet to develop an individual Program of Study\_for fulfilling all requirements for the degree. Completion of this Program of Study plan is required by our University.

Programs of study should be designed to meet annual goals for completion of degree requirements that have been set by our department and University. These timelines are provided in the pages immediately following this section and are primary criteria for the annual evaluation of graduate student progress in May of each year. Students will receive a form to complete and update several weeks prior to this annual evaluation.

Graduate students must consult with and receive authorization from their advisors each semester before registering for classes. *It is, however, the responsibility of the graduate student to verify that she or he is fulfilling all requirements for the degree.*

### ***Ethics***

All students should read and know the APA code of ethics when they start the program. Students are expected to engage in ethical behavior in clinical practice, research, and coursework. To ensure that students start the program with a foundation in ethical principles, students in the entering cohort will receive a reading list in the summer before starting the program, and a competency exam in the first-year practicum. Training in ethics is infused across the curriculum as well. Failure to uphold standards of ethics could result in remediation or dismissal from the program. The APA code of ethics can be found at:

<https://www.apa.org/ethics/code>

### *Degree Requirements*

1. 72 credit hours of approved graduate work

Students who have been admitted to the doctoral program in psychology but do not have an MA in psychology that has been accepted by the department must complete the degree requirements for the MA in Psychology (thesis option; PSYC 685 Seminar in Psychological Research not required) before they can be awarded the doctorate. The comprehensive exam requirement for the MA program does not need to be completed, given that the Clinical Program has two required comprehensive exams that must be completed for the doctoral degree.

2. One tool of research is required but does not result in course credit toward the degree. The tool requirement is defined as the dissemination of a research tool. Please see “Research dissemination tool” for further information.

3. Two comprehensive examinations are required. The written comprehensive is an examination on History and Systems of Psychology. The oral comprehensive is a specialty examination, which involves a clinical presentation.

4. Dissertation: A written proposal for the dissertation must be submitted and signed by the student's dissertation committee before the student can apply for internship. As of September 1, 2023, no committee members will sign a proposal until a committee meeting has been held (“pre-data orals” [pre-data analysis if archival data is being used]) at which the student orally defended the proposal. The dissertation, when completed, must be accepted by the dissertation committee, the department chair, and the university.

5. As part of the doctoral requirements, clinical students serve in at least one externship (lasting at least one academic year) and a one-year APA-accredited internship in an appropriate setting outside the university.

6. Passing of competency benchmarks for all competency domains: (1) research; (2) ethical and legal standards; (3) individual and cultural diversity; (4) assessment; (5) intervention; (6) supervision and consultation; (7) professional values, attitudes, and behaviors; and (8) communication and interpersonal skills.

#### **Required Courses (50 credit hours)**

PSYC-600 Advanced Memory and Cognition (3)

PSYC-618 Principles of Neuropsychological Assessment (3) or assessment course approved by the DCT (3)

PSYC-621 Ethnic and Minority Issues in Psychology (3)

PSYC-622 Stress, Coping, and Emotion (3)

PSYC-630 Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, and Practice (3)

PSYC-633 Psychological Assessment I (3)

PSYC-640 Advanced Social Psychology (3)



PSYC-650 Psychological Research (3)

PSYC-651 Psychopathology: Theory and Research (3)

PSYC-652 Assessment of Intellectual Function and Personality (3)

PSYC-660 Advanced Developmental Psychology (3)

PSYC-680 Experiential/Psychodynamic Psychotherapy Practicum I (3)

PSYC-681 Experiential/Psychodynamic Psychotherapy Practicum II (3)

PSYC-710 Cognitive-Behavior Therapy Practicum I (3)

PSYC-711 Cognitive-Behavior Therapy Practicum II (3)

PSYC-797 Master's Thesis Research (3)

PSYC-899 Doctoral Dissertation (2 credit hours required, may take up to 9)

PSYC-091 Internship (0 credits; must register each semester on internship, including summer)

**Advanced Practicum Sequence (6 credit hours)**

Complete one of the following two-course practicum sequences:

PSYC-780 Advanced Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy with Youth I (3) and

PSYC-781 Advanced Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy with Youth II (3)

OR

PSYC-793 Advanced Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies Practicum I (3) and

PSYC-794 Advanced Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies Practicum II (3)

**Biological Bases of Behavior (3 credit hours)**

Complete one course in Biological Bases of Behavior from the following:

PSYC-518 Advanced Human Neuropsychology (3)

PSYC-601 Physiological Psychology (3)

PSYC-613 Neuropharmacology: The Biochemistry of Behavior (3)

**Statistics (6 credit hours)**

Complete 6 credit hours of approved coursework in statistics from the following:

PSYC-640 Statistical Methods for Mediation and Moderation in Psychology (3)

STAT-615 Regression (3)

STAT-516 Design of Experiments (3)  
 STAT-517 Special Topics in Statistical Methodology (3)  
 STAT-519 Nonparametric Statistics (3)  
 STAT-520 Applied Multivariate Analysis (3)  
 STAT-521 Analysis of Categorical Data (3)  
 STAT-522 Time-Series Analysis (3)  
 STAT-626 Data Analysis with Statistical Software (3)  
 STAT-618 Bayesian Statistics (3)  
 STAT-622 Advanced Biostatistics (3)  
 STAT-627 Statistical Machine Learning (3)

Other statistics courses may be substituted if approved by the DCT. The two-class requirement represents a minimum: other statistics courses can be taken as additional, elective courses that do count toward the overall credit hour requirement.

**Clinical course policy:** Please note that practicum courses and externships require that students practice under the license of a clinical psychologist. It is the licensed professional's responsibility to ensure ethical, respectful, and professional care for clients. If the supervisor has major concerns about the quality of care, ethics, or professionalism, they may remove the students from clinical service delivery under their license. If the clinical training is part of a course, the student might not receive a passing grade and may need to retake the course following remediation.

### **Electives (7 credit hours)**

Complete 7 credit hours of approved electives

### **Externship and Internship Courses (2 credits)**

#### **Externship**

In addition to in-house practicum training, students are required to participate in at least two semesters of externships.

The Assistant DCT oversees externship activities, and will not support a student's application for a full (16 hour/week) externship until the student presents a signed MA thesis proposal and is collecting or has completed data for the thesis.

At the beginning of your externship, you must work with your externship site to complete the externship approval form that is given to you by the Assistant DCT. This is our written communication between the site and our program that outlines your externship activities. *No externship hours can be counted toward internship without the completed form.* This applies to both summer and academic-year externships.

### Internship

Students are required to complete an internship that is accredited by the American Psychological Association or Canadian Psychological Association.

Interns should register for 1 credit per semester of PSYC-899 Doctoral Dissertation in addition to PSYC- 091-Internship each semester the student is on internship. They should also register for PSYC-091 (which is 0 credits) in the Summer(s) in which the internship occurs.

There is no class meeting attendance associated with Internship registration.

Clinical Ph.D. students may apply for internships only if, by October 1 of the year that the student is applying for internship, the following have been completed:

- thesis orals have been passed,
- the final copy of the M.A. thesis has been submitted to the library with the signatures of all members on the committee,
- the student has attended at least one Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-racism training experience per year in the program,
- the dissertation proposal was distributed to the committee no later than September 15<sup>th</sup>,
- the dissertation proposal has been signed by three members of the committee supervising the research, and
- all comprehensive examinations have been passed; the tool of research, written research analysis, ethics written assessment, and celebration of research presentation must also have been completed.

Students who have not fulfilled all of these requirements by October 1 may not apply for internships for the next academic year. Faculty members will not write letters of recommendation for such students. In addition, clinical students must complete a minimum of 500 hours of direct intervention/assessment clinical experience before applying for internship.

Clinical Ph.D. students are required to serve a one-year internship prior to the completion of the Ph.D. Information regarding the availability of these internships is available from the DCT and various APPIC materials.

Please be aware that students who do not complete all Ph.D. requirements, including successful submission of the final approved dissertation to the University and receipt of a letter of internship completion by the University deadline in early August of a given year are required by our University to register for maintenance of matriculation for the Fall semester of that year, which typically begins before the end of August. Students in this situation can appeal for a waiver of Fall registration to the DCT, who may forward this appeal to the Chair of the Department of Psychology for possible negotiation with the College of Arts and Sciences. Students are responsible for requesting this waiver, and it should be done well in advance of the start of the Fall semester.

### *Other Clinical Ph.D. Requirements*

#### **First Year “Celebration of Research” Presentation**

In May of their first year, Clinical Ph.D. students must present to clinical faculty and students their MA research idea and any progress made in that research. Students and faculty gather for presentations, which are usually about 10 minutes each, followed by 5 minutes of questions.

#### **Research Assessment Evaluation**

The Research Assessment Evaluation requires students to critically analyze a research article. It will be completed at the end of their second semester in the program at a time designated by the DCT. The article to be reviewed and analyzed each year will come from the content areas of Psychopathology and Psychotherapy. This assessment is required and is used to demonstrate research competency. If you do not meet competency standards on this evaluation, you will need to work toward meeting competency on a second administration.

#### *Ethics Exam*

**In the summer before your first year, you will be given an ethics reading list. There will also be an ethics unit in your first year practicum. In that practicum, you take an ethics exam based on the readings and course content. If you do not meet competency standards on this exam, you will need to work toward meeting competency on a second administration.**

#### *Supervision and Consultation Readings and Reflection*

By the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> year, you need to complete a set of assigned readings on supervision and consultation and complete 4 brief reflections about the readings and your own supervision and consultation experiences. These readings will be graded. If you do not meet competency on the reflection papers, you will need to work toward meeting competency with additional readings and an assessment.

#### **Comprehensive Examinations**

Clinical students must pass two comprehensive examinations: an oral examination on an area of clinical specialization and a written comprehensive exam on history and systems.

#### **Clinical Ph.D. Specialty Comprehensive Examination (Oral)**

The format for the required specialty comprehensive exam for clinical doctoral students is modeled on colloquia typically presented by faculty job candidates: the student prepares a presentation of approximately 45 minutes, demonstrating advanced, specialized competence in an area of clinical practice and knowledge of the relevant empirical work.

Although the “Specialty Comp” is *not* solely a “case presentation,” one or more cases must be used to provide a detailed illustration of the specialty. A committee of two faculty members, one of whom must be full-time in the department conducts the 2-hour oral examination. The exam begins with a 45-min presentation by the student, which should include a review of the relevant empirical literature, along with presentation of a case (or cases) that illustrate the expertise in training in that

area and connect the observations with the empirical literature. Faculty then pose questions to the student regarding the presentation, specialty area, and empirical literature surrounding the specialty.

Written materials such as relevant psychotherapy and testing reports or other supporting materials or data, if you wish to include them, are made available to the committee at the time of the oral presentation, not in advance. The presentation may include an audio- or videotape of a therapy session. If audio or video material is used during the presentation, the presenter must obtain signed releases from the clients and present those releases at the oral exam. In addition, the discussion and analysis of any cases as well as the approach taken to it must demonstrate sensitivity to cultural considerations relevant to the presented case(s), ethical issues raised by the case(s), and a comprehensive grounding in research supporting the clinical specialty.

The faculty committee may make more specific or additional requirements in advance of the examination.

The result of the exam will be Pass, Revise, or Fail. If the result is “Revise”, the committee will determine the form of any requested revisions. If the result is “Fail,” then consistent with the university’s graduate academic regulations (section 8.3), “A student who fails a comprehensive examination may apply to the Graduate Program Director [Note: This is the DCT] for one additional attempt. If the Graduate Program Director approves the application, the retake of the exam should occur within six months of the date of the first attempt. Students who fail a retake attempt will be dismissed from the doctoral program.”

### **History and Systems Comprehensive Examination (Written)**

#### ***Readings***

Questions on the comprehensive exam are based on readings. The reading list may comprise any type of readings that professors choose (e.g., books, book chapters, journal articles, monographs). The reading list for the written comprehensive exam will be available by Dropbox or OneDrive. Changes in the reading list take effect six months after they are made. Students should feel free to discuss the reading list with the clinical faculty.

#### ***Scheduling***

The examination is given one time a year, typically in July. Exact dates will be announced by the DCT each year.

Students must notify, Senior Administrative Assistant (Lefteris Hazapis) in the Department of Psychology at least four weeks ahead of time if they plan to take the written comprehensive examination. Students with documented learning disabilities who need accommodations for the exam should contact the University’s Academic Support Center several weeks in advance of the exam to arrange for accommodations.

#### ***Administration Procedure***

The written comprehensive exam is open book and consists of a series of essay questions.

### ***Grading***

Questions will be graded pass-fail. The student must have passes on all questions in order to pass the exam. A pass is defined as C or better. Grades on comprehensive exam questions are similar to grades for courses. As the department does not consider appeals of grades for courses, it will not consider appeals of grades on comprehensive exams. Comprehensive exam graders are encouraged to provide ample feedback on comprehensive examination answers, so that students understand the reason for the grades received.

Our university regulations allow only one failure and one re-take for a given comprehensive exam. A student who arranges to take a written comprehensive examination, receives the exam, and does not submit anything to be graded, will be considered as having taken the examination.

A failed exam must be retaken within 6 months, according to University regulations, or the student will be dismissed from the University. This retake must be approved in advance by the students' degree program director. In addition, if any comprehensive exam is failed twice the student will be dismissed, according to University regulations.

### **Research Dissemination Tool**

Clinical students must complete one tool of research, a research dissemination tool. To successfully complete this tool, students must present a poster or paper at a scholarly meeting or have a paper accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. The research must have been primarily conducted during the student's time in the AU Psychology graduate program. Students must have made a major contribution to the presented or published work. Students may fulfill this requirement by disseminating work they conducted as part of AU's terminal Master's program in Psychology. The tool requirement cannot be fulfilled by the dissemination of work that was primarily conducted at a non-AU site prior to beginning the Clinical Psychology Ph.D. program or by work that was primarily conducted as an undergraduate at AU. When the tool of research is complete, the student should get a tool form from Lefteris and complete the form with their advisor.

### ***Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism Training***

All students must attend a minimum of one training seminar, workshop, or lecture per year. These experiences could be talks, colloquia, and workshops outside of regular class meetings. All talks/lectures scheduled by the program, as well as any talk scheduled by the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, count toward this requirement. We certainly encourage students to attend other trainings outside of what we offer, so students simply need to ask the DCT if a given training/talk/lecture will count before they attend the event. All trainings should be noted on the student's annual progress form that is completed in April. The student is not allowed to apply for internship if they have not averaged a minimum of one training attendance per year.

### **Wednesday Afternoon Series**

Starting Fall semester 2023, the program is attempting to consolidate most or all guest speakers and other professional development programming in the time slot from 2:30 to 4:00 pm on Wednesday afternoons. These meetings will occur about twice a month, on a schedule to be distributed at the start of each semester. All students, but especially those in the first 3 years of

the program, are strongly encouraged to keep this time clear in their schedules and to attend these program events regularly.

### ***Thesis and Dissertation Requirements and Procedures***

We require the completion of an MA thesis and doctoral dissertation.

**Transfer of MA Thesis.** University regulations favor approval of transfer of an MA thesis prior to admission to one of our graduate degree programs.

Theses that have been defended successfully and completed while the student is enrolled in our MA Program in General Psychology are automatically accepted as fulfilling the thesis requirement for our graduate programs.

If a graduate student recently enrolled at our University wishes to have a thesis completed at another institution fulfill the MA thesis requirement for one of our graduate programs, the director of the student's program should send it to two full-time AU faculty members whose expertise is in the area of the thesis for consideration. During this time, the thesis should be on file in the Psychology Department office for 10 days, and its availability made known to the department at large. If both AU faculty approve, the requirement is waived at the departmental level. The student's degree program director should forward this recommendation to the Office of the Provost via the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences for consideration. If both faculty readers disapprove, the thesis requirement is not waived. If there is a difference of opinion between the two readers, the matter is returned to the director of the degree program for further consideration. With a waiver approved by the Department, Dean, and Provost, the Department requirement for the master's thesis itself is satisfied.

Note that University regulations prohibit transfer of course credits to fulfill the necessary 3 hours of thesis research. Thus, with an accepted thesis transfer, the 3 credit hours otherwise allocated to thesis research may be used to take another course to fulfill 72 hour total credit hour requirement.

**Content Overlap of Theses and Dissertations.** Theses and dissertations should be different studies. However, these studies can be in the same topical area; the dissertation cannot be a replication of the thesis and should be a substantially additive contribution. If there is a question concerning similarities between a student's thesis and dissertation, the question should be brought to the attention of the program director.

**Committee Composition.** Students must have at least one core committee member who has demonstrable expertise in the area being investigated. Students are reminded that they may select the faculty members for their committees from the *entire* faculty, not just faculty from their area of specialization.

Thesis committee and dissertation membership must be approved by the Director of the student's graduate degree program (University regulation).

It is important that students and faculty understand that even signed thesis and dissertation proposals are not contracts that in any way obligate acceptance of the product of the proposed research by the thesis or dissertation committee.

### **Thesis Committee**

A student's masters thesis committee must consist of at least three members (at least 2 must be full-time faculty in our Department of Psychology). One of the three members will preferably be from outside the Department and will be chosen by the student and the chair of the thesis committee.

Members of thesis committees cannot include former American University graduate students who have graduated less than 5 years before the date of the oral examination.

"Outside" members of thesis committees must be approved by the chair of the committee and must have clear, proven expertise in the area of the thesis. In order to preclude any misunderstandings, it is essential that the details concerning how the committee will operate and the respective role of each member of the committee be discussed and agreed upon at the time the committee is formed.

### **Dissertation Committee**

Rules and procedures for the forming of dissertation committees are periodically revised by the University: students and faculty advisors are encouraged to consult the graduate academic regulations at <http://www.american.edu/provost/grad/upload/Graduate-Academic-Regulations.pdf> for the most current information. The dissertation chair must be full-time and tenured. The Dissertation Committee will typically have four or more core committee members, including the chair of the committee. However, according to university regulations, the minimum number of core committee members, including the chair of the committee, is three. At least two of the core members must be full-time, tenure-line faculty members at American. Qualified individuals, either outside the department or outside the University, may sit on the committee as external members once the minimum requirement of two internal full-time, tenure-line faculty from American University has been met. Together, the internal and external members form the core of the Dissertation Committee. All core members are encouraged to become involved in the planning and execution of the dissertation. One aspect of this involvement will be participation in the pre-data/pre-analysis orals before approval of the dissertation proposal (see earlier section on Program Requirements).

In consultation with the student's primary research mentor, the doctoral student should solicit faculty members for the committee and then submit the names of the Chair and other committee members for approval by the Graduate Program Director. If the status of any member of an approved Dissertation Committee changes, the doctoral student and the Graduate Program Director will recommend a replacement.

At the time of the final examination of the dissertation, at least one additional member will join the core of the Dissertation Committee as an outside reader for the final examination. It is not required that the outside reader attend the defense. The outside reader should have no direct association with the student. The purpose of the outside reader(s) is to provide a review of the dissertation by a colleague with the appropriate terminal degree who is an expert in the subject matter of the dissertation. An outside reader serves an advisory role, and the charge to the outside reader is to determine if the dissertation meets general standards in the field, not necessarily to critique the work in detail. Once the dissertation has been successfully defended,



all committee members sign the dissertation title page. A letter of approval from the outside reader may replace the outside reader's signature on the dissertation title page.

Members of dissertation committees cannot include former American University graduate students who have graduated less than 5 years before the date of the oral examination. In order to preclude any misunderstandings, it is essential that the details concerning how the committee will operate and the respective role of each member of the committee be discussed and agreed upon at the time the committee is formed.

## **Oral Defenses of Theses and Dissertations**

### **Oral Defense Scheduling and Attendance**

University rules regarding dissertation defense are sometimes revised: please consult the graduate regulations for the most current information.

Master's and dissertation orals must be public. All committee members may be physically present or may participate via teleconferencing. Students are responsible for asking a department administrative assistant to notify all faculty and graduate students in our department of the date, time, and room of the defense at least two weeks (14 days) in advance of the defense. Graduate students are required to upload a copy of their thesis or dissertation to the departmental thesis and dissertation site at least one week before the defense. Dissertation defense announcements must also be posted on the Graduate Studies webpage under the Office of the Provost.

### **Oral Defense Procedures**

- a. The chairperson will determine the examination procedure and the sequence of questioning.
- b. It is expected that final oral examinations will require approximately two hours for theses, and three hours for dissertations. During the examination, each committee member should have a minimum of 30 minutes for presenting questions.
- c. Questions from visitors will be taken at the discretion of the chairperson, but only after an initial round of questions by the committee members has been taken. Questions may be submitted in advance of the examination by interested faculty and students not planning on attending. Such questions should be submitted to the chairperson, at whose discretion they may be raised during the examination.
- d. Following the oral defense, the candidate and all visitors will be excused. However, the committee members may request consultation from one or more visitors who have attended the examination. All noncommittee members must leave the examination before a final decision is made concerning the candidate's performance.

## **Written Format and Revision Timeline**

The format for the thesis and dissertation must follow University guidelines. A manual titled "Requirements for Preparation of Theses and Dissertations" is available from the Dean's office. Issues not discussed there should follow the APA format, as per the Publication Manual of the APA, 7<sup>th</sup> edition (2020). An electronic copy of every thesis and dissertation must be provided to the Department of Psychology: this is the student's responsibility before graduation.

After the oral defense of the thesis or dissertation, students are expected to make requested revisions and to submit the revised manuscript to the thesis or dissertation committee chair within two months. The final manuscript should be submitted to the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies within six months from the date of the oral defense.

### *Degree Completion Information*

Before being awarded the doctoral degree, Clinical Ph.D. students need to complete all program requirements listed in this handbook.

Before receiving an MA degree *en passant* to the Ph.D., clinical students must complete the following requirements for the MA:

33 credits including:

3 credits MA Thesis Research PSYC 797

3 credits Psychological Research (PSYC-650)

**3 credits Statistics from list of approved courses in earlier section on doctoral program course requirements**

24 credits of graduate electives, approved by the student's advisor. Students must also complete an MA Thesis.

These requirements are a subset of the requirements for the Clinical Psychology doctorate. Students who transfer credits into the program, to receive a doctoral degree from the program, must complete at least three full-time academic years of graduate study (or equivalent) in the program and internship.

### *Transferring Courses Taken Elsewhere Before Matriculation*

Students may transfer up to 6 credits into the program for courses taken prior to first enrollment at AU and at accredited institutions outside of the Consortium of Universities of the Washington metropolitan area, if the following conditions are met:

- a. Before the end of the first semester of participation in their AU degree program, students must petition, in writing, the program for consideration of transfer credits. This petition should attach relevant syllabi and an official copy of all transcript showing courses requested for transfer.
- b. Students' petitions must be approved and countersigned by their research mentor. Petitions not approved by advisors will be returned to students. All transfer of courses also must be approved by the DCT.
- c. Courses taken at other universities must have a grade of at least B (3.0) in order to be transferred into the graduate program. B- is not acceptable.

- d. Courses transferred from other schools must not have been taken more than 5 years prior to admission to AU.
- e. The courses proposed for transfer were not used as credits toward a completed undergraduate or graduate degree in a similar field, including any area of psychology or public health. [University requirement being revised, however.]
- f. Independent Study courses cannot be transferred in.
- g. Course transfers approved by the advisor and program director will be forwarded by the program director to the Director of Graduate Academic Programs in the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences together with the graduate action form and the student's official transcript.

Although the regulations allow 6 transfer credits, you may petition to allow more credits to transfer. Please see the Director of Clinical Training for procedures to petition for more transfer credits.

### *Transferring Courses Taken Elsewhere After Matriculation at AU*

Residency requirement: According to University regulations, both master's and doctoral degrees require a minimum of 18 semester credit hours of in residence graduate course work, not counting PSYC-797, PSYC-899, or similar courses in other departments. For Ph.D. students APA requires that clinical doctoral students must be in residence for three years.

Ph.D. students may take a maximum of 12 credits outside the Department. This limit and the permission process described next refer to courses taken in other departments at American University or through the Consortium. They do not refer to courses transferred in from other universities prior to beginning graduate work or to statistics courses taken in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics.

Permissions required for Ph.D. students to take courses outside the University while enrolled at AU vary by type of course as follows:

- a. For elective courses, students must have the permission of the advisor and of the instructor (if any) of the same course at American prior to enrolling in the course.
- b. For required (not elective) courses, the student must have approval from the DCT prior to enrolling in the course.

### **Testing Out of Required Courses**

Students may test out of required courses by passing an exam prepared by the professor who teaches the course. Except for entering first year students, students should notify the professor of their intent one month prior to the start of the course. Students may test out of a maximum of three courses. If a graduate student fails such an exam, they may not retake it.

### *Time Limits on Courses*

Courses completed more than nine years before finishing a PhD may not fulfill degree requirements.

### *Guidance on Research Credits*

It is sometimes difficult to know which research credits to sign up for at various stages of your progress through the program. Here is a guide to how you might sign up for research credits over the course of your time at AU:

Year 1: [unlikely to need research credits]

Year 2: PSYC 797 MA thesis Research (3 credits) – required.

Year 3: Not a requirement, but if you want to use elective credits on research credits rather than an elective course, take PSYC 698 Directed Research

Year 4: same as Year 3

Year 5 (if on internship): PSYC 899<sup>1</sup> Doctoral Dissertation (can take repeatedly. Cannot register for this until advanced to candidacy)

Year 5 (if not on internship) PSYC 898<sup>1</sup> Doctoral Continuing Enrollment (may only take 2 semesters)

Year 6 (presumably on internship) – same as “Year 5 (if on internship)” above

#### <sup>1</sup>Notes on 898/899

If you are in your 5th year, *not on internship*, and done all coursework, then you should sign up for Psych 898, which is doctoral continuing enrollment. You can sign up for 898 *only two semesters*, so do try to ensure that you’ve “advanced to candidacy” (see below) by the time you have used both semesters of 898.

Once you have advanced to candidacy you can enroll for 899. There is not a limit on the number of 899s that you can take. You will almost certainly be using 899 credit the year you’re on internship.

When you sign up for 898 or 899, you sign up for 9 credits to maintain full time status, but the cost to you is only 1 credit.

The Graduate Continuous Registration form to register for either PSYC-898 or PSYC-899 can be found at this link: <https://www.american.edu/provost/registrar/pdf/upload/Graduate-Continuous-Registration.pdf>

PSYC-899 registration requires that the student have “advanced to candidacy” (aka “ABD”). This is operationally defined in Psychology as having a signed dissertation proposal, all courses completed (with the exception of the clinical internship), and all comprehensive examinations passed, and advance to candidacy paperwork submitted to and approved by the office of graduate studies. Please see Office of Graduate Studies website for the most up to date information and forms regarding the process of advancing to candidacy (<https://www.american.edu/provost/ogps/graduate-studies/advancement-to-candidacy.cfm>).

Typically, this process involves submitting a checklist, research training certificate, degree audit (DCT requests this from the Dean's office), and dissertation committee approval form.

### ***Saving Credits in the Fourth Year***

In your 4th year, your last year of TA funding, you should save 2 credits if possible. The Dean's office has allowed us to "save" 2 credits for the 5th year, so you will not have to pay for that year of 898 or 899 credit. So there should be one semester in your 4<sup>th</sup> year that you sign up for 7 credits.

### ***Competency Monitoring***

In order to progress successfully through the program, we systematically monitor competency benchmarks to ensure that students are meeting standards in a number of areas. For APA accreditation we have defined these benchmarks across a number of "Profession Wide Competencies" and "Discipline Specific Knowledge." The benchmarks are a combination of grades in courses and ratings on annual research and clinical evaluations.

We use a "Competency Map" to ensure that students have clear guidance on the evaluated competencies expected throughout training. The Competency Map also serves as a tracking document that can be completed annually and is placed in the students' Dropbox folder (shared by the student, advisor, DCT, and administrative assistant). Each year the administrative assistant will update the Competency Map for each student. The DCT will review the document each year for each student in order to catch if there are any students who are falling short on expected competencies, or not getting rated on a specific domain. For example, if you pass a course that is used as a competency benchmark but do not meet competency levels (e.g., the benchmark is B- but you get a C+), the course still counts toward your degree requirements but you will work with the DCT and your faculty advisor on a remediation plan to ensure you achieve our standards for competency in that area.

In order to complete the program, students must demonstrate competency in all of the APA-defined categories: research, ethical and legal standards, assessment, intervention, supervision, consultation, individual and cultural diversity, professional values, and attitudes and behaviors, communication and interpersonal skills. If a student is falling short of expected performance in any of these areas, they will be placed on a remediation plan. If the student does not show improvement, they could be dismissed from the program.

### ***Clinical Student Evaluation and Feedback***

Students will receive feedback on their research and clinical performance annually. In the spring semester, the DCT will ask students to complete a written annual update of their research, clinical experiences, coursework, and multicultural training experiences. The research mentor will complete a written evaluation of research progress throughout the year, including progress on the thesis or dissertation, scientific mindedness, participation in research dissemination, ethical conduct of research, and professionalism. The document is housed in a Dropbox or OneDrive file that is accessible to the student and faculty member. Mentors should meet with students to discuss these annual evaluations. Practicum and externship supervisors will also complete standard forms each semester to provide feedback on training progress. Supervisors will provide ratings on a number of relevant dimensions, including therapy and assessment skill,

ethics, multicultural competence, professionalism and timely completion of work, communication, and receptiveness to supervision.

There will be an annual meeting of the clinical faculty to review progress and discuss ways to support individual student growth. The research and clinical evaluations will be collected by the DCT and Assistant DCT, who will review all ratings and bring relevant concerns, areas for improvement, and specific strengths to the attention of the faculty in this meeting. Based on this information, the Clinical Faculty will decide on specific actions. Students will receive a letter from the program indicating that they are making satisfactory progress or outlining specific steps that need to happen in order to progress in the program. Students who are falling behind in research will be asked to develop a specific remediation plan with their mentor and submit the timeline to the DCT. Students who are not meeting expectations in other competency areas (e.g., ethics, professionalism, communication, individual & cultural diversity) will work with their mentor, DCT, and/or Assistant DCT to develop a remediation plan.

To successfully move through the program in a timely manner, students should have completed their thesis project by the end of their third year. If students have not submitted their completed thesis by the end of the third year, they will automatically be placed on “progress watch” for the coming year. The program will ask that they submit a remediation plan and timeline for project completion. If students have not completed the thesis by the end of the fourth year, they will be placed on probation in the program. *Please note that program probation is reported on internship verification forms.*

### ***Dismissal Criteria for Clinical Ph.D. Students***

The following is a summary of grounds for dismissal of a student from the Clinical doctoral program:

- a. Students will be dismissed from the University if their cumulative grade-point average (GPA) remains below 3.00 for two consecutive semesters. According to the Graduate Academic Regulations, the University Registrar places graduate students on probation if their cumulative GPA falls below 3.00. The Registrar permanently dismisses the student if the cumulative GPA does not rise to 3.00 or better the following semester.
- b. Receiving a second C (or lower) grade can result in probation or dismissal (Departmental regulation), even if the cumulative GPA is 3.00 or higher.
- c. Unfavorable evaluation of progress of graduate student progress by the Clinical Ph.D. program advisory committee. The annual progress evaluation meeting occurs in May of each year, but major breaches of ethics or professionalism can result in program dismissal at any time.
- d. Doctoral students are expected to complete all degree requirements in no more than nine years after the date of first enrollment in the degree program.
- e. Failing a comprehensive examination twice, or any two comprehensive examinations once
- f. Not passing a required comprehensive examination within 6 months of taking a previously failed examination (University regulation).

- g. Failing a thesis oral examination twice (Departmental regulation).
- h. Failing a dissertation oral examination twice (University regulation).

### ***Professional Development***

We encourage students to seek out additional professional development activities in their time in the program. Our program will provide some workshops and/or outside speakers on career development (e.g., “The Basics of Starting a Private Practice,” “Career Paths in the Veterans Affairs System,” “Finding Work-Life Balance”). In addition, you are strongly encouraged to join a professional society, not just for research purposes, but for the professional development opportunities offered. For example, many students in the program join Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies, American Psychological Association, and/or American Psychological Society. The annual conferences have career and personal development symposia, and there are special interest groups that one can join to network within one’s own area of interest throughout the year. At the First Year Orientation meeting, the DCT will circulate a list of professional societies that might be interesting to students.

Finally, know that your career and personal goals are important to us, and we want to help support individual goals. It is helpful to have ongoing conversations with your advisor and the DCT about your career goals, so that they can connect you with appropriate resources and provide guidance.

### ***Graduate Students Teaching Courses in the Department***

Graduate students who would like to teach a course in the department must fulfill the following requirements:

- a. Completion of the MA degree, and
- b. Either of the following:
  - a. Completion of the Greenberg Seminars or
  - b. Completion of a Teaching Assistant position for the course to be taught, with supervision by a faculty member.

The student is expected to let the faculty member know that they are interested in teaching the course, and write a contract with the faculty for specific supervision in course development and execution. The graduate student will be expected to develop a course portfolio documenting course preparation, including samples of a course syllabus, assignments, and lectures (ideally, the student will have sought opportunities to guest lecture in the course).

### ***Licensing Rules***

Licensing rules are state-specific: if you know where you plan to practice, we strongly recommend that you investigate laws in that state with regard to requirements. It is possible that some states will require coursework that we do not. A guide to this issue is maintained on the program website (see “consumer disclosure information” under “Licensure information”).

### *Conscience Clause for Clinical Ph.D. Students*

#### **Program Policies Related to Trainees Who Experience Conflicts Working with Diverse Clients/Patients:**

In our APA-accredited program, we are committed to a training process that ensures that graduate students develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to work effectively with members of the public who embody intersecting demographics, attitudes, beliefs, and values. When graduate students' attitudes, beliefs, or values create tensions that negatively impact the training process or their ability to effectively treat members of the public, the program faculty and supervisors are committed to a developmental training approach that is designed to support the acquisition of professional competence. We support graduate students in finding a belief- or value-congruent path that allows them to work in a professionally competent manner with all clients/patients.

For some trainees, integrating personal beliefs or values with professional competence in working with all clients/patients may require additional time and faculty support. Ultimately though, to complete our program successfully, all graduate students must be able to work with any client placed in their care in a beneficial and non-injurious manner. Professional competencies are determined by the profession for the benefit and protection of the public; consequently, students do not have the option to avoid working with particular client populations or refuse to develop professional competencies because of conflicts with their attitudes, beliefs, or values.

#### *Due Process and Grievance*

A student may come into disagreement with a faculty member or with the policies and actions of an academic unit as they affect the student's progress toward completion of their degree. In cases of complaint or disagreement over academic matters not resolved by consultation among the parties, the University provides the student the right to initiate a grievance procedure, as described in the Student Academic Grievance Policy located on the Office of Undergraduate Studies website under Academic Policies (<https://www.american.edu/policies/upload/Academic-Grade-Grievances-Policy.pdf>)

Students should have protection through orderly procedures against prejudiced or capricious academic evaluation. At the same time, they are responsible for maintaining standards of academic performance established for each course in which they are enrolled. Evaluation of students and the awarding of credit must be based on academic performance professionally judged and not on matters irrelevant to that performance, such as personality, physical disability, age, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, degree of political activism, or personal beliefs.

Judgment regarding standards of evaluation for a student's academic performance is a faculty responsibility and is not grievable. Normally, only questions relating to whether a faculty member complied with the stated requirements of the course and applied standards of evaluation fairly and equitably are potentially grievable.

Note that there is also a University grievance policy on disability-related accommodations (<https://www.american.edu/policies/upload/Reasonable-Accommodations-Grievance-Procedures-for-Students.pdf>).



### ***Academic Integrity***

The Academic Integrity Code for American University defines honorable conduct, outlines attendant rights and responsibilities, and describes procedures for handling allegations of academic misconduct. All graduate students should be sure to read the code (<https://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code.cfm>) and to conduct their studies with intellectual honesty.

### ***Disability Support***

Our program is committed to providing access and support to individuals with disabilities. If you need disability-related accommodations, it is important that you connect with the Academic Support and Access Center (ASAC). They will facilitate the process of registering for accommodations. ASAC resources can be found at their website, <https://www.american.edu/provost/academic-access/>.

### ***Nondiscrimination Policy***

American University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution that operates in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy or parenting, age, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, personal appearance, gender identity and expression, family responsibilities, political affiliation, source of income, veteran status, an individual's genetic information or any other bases. The University expressly prohibits any form of discriminatory harassment including sexual harassment, dating and domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, sexual exploitation and stalking. For more detailed information regarding University policy on nondiscrimination, please see this webpage:

<https://www.american.edu/policies/upload/Discrimination-and-Sexual-Harassment-Policy.pdf>

### ***Financial Aid: Departmental Support***

Graduate students in the doctoral program may be supported by graduate assistantships (GAs) funded primarily to help faculty with teaching (TAs) or research (RAs), although both types may involve a mixture of teaching, research, and some administrative activities. Only students in good standing receive such awards. Details of the conditions of the award, including restrictions on other employment that may be accepted, will be specified in the award letter received from the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's office.

### ***Administrative Support***

The department senior administrative assistant (Lefteris Hazapis) is available to assist you with navigating paperwork, registrations, filing, and other administrative tasks. Britten Rollo, senior administrative assistant, is available for budgetary support for research labs, research awards, and travel awards.

### ***University Regulations vs Graduate Handbook Regulations***

Requirements described in this Handbook do not negate our University's rules found at Graduate Academic Regulations , but refine and augment them. If a more stringent requirement is provided in the Handbook than in University regulations, the requirement in the Handbook applies. Requests for exceptions to department or University regulations must be made by petition from the student, approved by the student's faculty advisor, to the DCT or Provost.

#### ***Which Handbook Applies to Me?***

Graduate students should follow the requirements in the Handbook published in the summer prior to their first enrollment in the program. An exception to this guideline is that sometimes rules are adopted later that apply to all students, regardless of when they first enrolled. An example in AY 2023-24 is the rule taking effect 9/1/23 requiring an oral defense of the dissertation proposal. Such modifications, and their applicability, will be communicated to all students by email from the DCT. More generally, each graduate student is responsible for keeping current on Department and University regulations. Minutes of the Department Council communicate changes in regulations. Copies of these minutes are available from the departmental Administrative Assistants.