
**Yale University
Department of Psychology**

Description of Formal Requirements for the Ph.D. Degree

Version: 6/21/17

Version History

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- 8/21/13 - Added section about vacation policy; Added info about new 'First Year Research' course # (PSYC 920); Updated 'Choice of Advisor' section to specify the steps that should be taken to change advisors; Revised wording of the 'Requests to study in absentia' section (JFD/BJS)
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Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Introductory Notes	3
Summary of Requirements	3
Bi-Annual Progress Reports	4
Yearly Research and Scholarship Schedule	4
First-Year Research Paper	5
Pre-Dissertation Paper	6
Departmental Approval of Continuation Beyond the 2 nd Year	8
Theme Essay	9
Dissertation Prospectus	10
The Ph.D. Dissertation	12
5-Person Dissertation Meeting	12
Requests to Study <i>In Absentia</i>	14
Oral Examination	15
Procedures for Submitting Dissertations to the Graduate School	16

Appendices

A. Bi-Annual Progress Report Form	17
B. Pre-Dissertation Committee Form	18
C. Theme Essay Certification Form	19
D. Dissertation Prospectus Certification Form	20
E. 5-Person Dissertation Committee Form	21

Introductory Notes

This document presents the formal requirements for the Ph.D. program in Psychology at Yale University. All graduate students should carefully review these requirements periodically. Questions should be addressed to either the Departmental Registrar or the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

In addition, all graduate students should carefully review the requirements and regulations for the Ph.D. provided by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. These requirements must also be satisfied and can be found online at:

<http://gsas.yale.edu/academics/programs-policies>

For students in the Clinical program, there are additional requirements related to breadth that are prescribed by the American Psychological Association and that are necessary for clinical licensure. Students should refer to the Clinical Area Mission Statement or consult with the Director of Clinical Training regarding these additional requirements.

Students should note that this document describes the *minimal* requirements for the Ph.D. degree in Psychology. While satisfying these formal requirements, students should also have frequent discussions with the faculty about those additional (and often independent) activities — such as publishing papers and presenting research at conferences — that may also be important for achieving their professional goals.

Summary of Requirements

This section contains a brief outline and summary of the departmental graduate requirements. Each requirement is then described at greater length in the remainder of this document.

Primary Requirements

Graduate students in Psychology have one primary formal requirement to fulfill during each semester of their first three years, beginning with their 2nd semester, and ending with their 6th semester:

Semester	Due Date(s)	Requirement
All	January 15	Bi-Annual Progress Report
All	May 1	Bi-Annual Progress Report
1	—	[No primary requirement during first semester]
2	May 1	First-Year Research Paper
3	October 1	Pre-Dissertation Proposal
4	April 1 + May 10	Pre-Dissertation Paper
5	December 1 + Feb 1	Theme Essay (Committee version + Approved Version)
6	April 15 + June 1	Dissertation Prospectus (Committee Version + Approved Version)
8+	May 15	Meet with Dissertation Committee to review progress *

* During students' 4th and 5th years, their primary requirements consist of conducting the dissertation research, writing the dissertation, and having it evaluated (including at their final Oral Examination). These requirements are described in detail below, but different students complete these final stages of their graduate careers at different times. In all cases, students will **meet annually with their Dissertation Committee by May 15th** from the 4th year on to review their progress on the Ph.D., unless a 5-person Committee Meeting is held that year (as described more fully in the 'Dissertation Prospectus' section).

Course Requirements

By the end of their second year, all students are expected to have completed a minimum of **three graduate courses**, two of which must be outside the student's area of concentration (and in different areas). These will typically be 500-level courses, though sufficiently broad 600-level courses can count if approved by the DGS (as described below in the section on 'Departmental Approval of Continuation Beyond the 2nd Year', under the 'Basic Requirements' heading). **The fourth required course is Data Analysis (PSYC 518a, in the first semester).**

During the 3rd year and beyond, students should continue taking those more specialized (600-level) courses that are appropriate for their educational goals.

In addition, each semester all students are expected to register for both (1) the '*Current Works*' course in their home 'area' (PSYC 7xx) and (2) a '*Research Topics*' course (PSYC 7xx) by their research advisor.

Bi-Annual Progress Reports

Twice each year, in mid-January and mid-May, each graduate student in the department must submit a Progress Report providing a cumulative list of professional activities, including:

- Research accomplished
- Papers published or in-press, and submitted manuscripts
- Conference presentations (posters and talks)
- TF assignments
- Courses taken
- Other professional presentations (e.g. lab meetings, departmental 'lunch' talks)
- Awards and honors

In addition, each submitted Progress Report should contain a brief discussion of the student's:

- Most significant accomplishments from the preceding 6 months
- Goals (and most important opportunities for improvement) for the next 6 months
- Areas of desired additional mentoring or training

These progress reports should help students to keep track of their identity as professional psychologists, and enable the faculty to gauge students' progress, and to attain an explicit understanding of each student's educational needs in the context of our graduate program. Faculty also use these reports in preparing bi-annual evaluations of their advisees.

Forms

A template for these reports is provided in *Appendix A* of this document.

Due Dates

Completed Progress Reports are due each year on January 15th and May 1st. Copies should be turned in both to the student's advisor of record, and to the departmental Registrar.

Yearly Research and Scholarship Schedule

Graduate students may take two weeks of vacation time beyond the stated University holidays and the time between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day. Vacations must not conflict with any academic, research, or teaching obligations, and vacation time does not accrue across budget years. Although classes are not held, Spring and Fall recesses and summers are not considered Yale University holidays.

First-Year Research Paper

The faculty believe that there is great value to beginning research as soon as possible, and that all graduate students should have at least one research project planned, underway, and perhaps completed by the end of their first year. To this end, each first-year graduate student is required to enroll in ‘First Year Research’ during both semesters, and to turn in a First-Year Research Paper to the faculty by the end of their second semester.

Content

The research project reported in the First-Year Research Paper can take many forms, and students should be in close contact with their project advisor throughout the research about the possible formats and contents of the Paper. As noted below, the Paper will be evaluated both by the project advisor (who must be a primary faculty member in the Department of Psychology) as well as by two other departmental faculty members. Examples of projects that may be suitable include experimental or laboratory research, field studies, surveys, etc. In all cases, because students will conduct this project during their first year, **careful replications of previous studies or reports of null results or preliminary ‘pilot’ data collection** are completely acceptable, as are **reports of collaborative research projects on which students are not the lead investigator**. (In this latter case, however, the Research Paper itself must still be written solely by the student, even if co-authors may take the lead in writing up other versions of the research.) Reports of data collected during students’ undergraduate careers, however — or other data collected prior to students’ matriculation at Yale — are *not* acceptable. It is not expected that the resulting paper will always be of publication quality, or that the reported project will always be complete. Indeed, in some cases the project itself may continue, and may form the core of the student’s Pre-dissertation Paper, due the following year.

Format

In most cases the First-Year Research Paper will take the form of **an APA-style manuscript**, formatted as for submission to a journal. However, faculty project advisors may suggest alternate formats for certain projects, and so students should determine the format of the document in consultation with their advisors.

Due Date

The First-Year Research Paper should be approved and signed (on the cover page) by the project’s faculty advisor and then turned in to the Departmental Registrar no later than **May 1st** of the second semester. As with most papers, note that the write-up of First-Year Research Papers will inevitably take considerably more time than students anticipate. Students are encouraged to begin work on this requirement as soon as is feasible, and to **produce intermediate drafts for review** by faculty project advisors. Students should be in contact with their project advisors about how much lead time they will require to read and evaluate drafts (including the final draft) before the May 1st deadline. Final drafts should also be submitted directly to the two additional faculty readers, as noted below.

Course Registration

While conducting this research, and preparing the First-Year Research Paper during their first two semesters, students should register for “**First Year Research**” — **PSYC 920a** (during the fall semester) and **PSYC 920b** (during the spring semester).

Choice of Advisor

No later than the beginning of the second semester, it is expected that **each student will have arranged for an advisor** to supervise the project that will be reported in their First-Year Research Paper. Students are encouraged to discuss this possibility with any faculty members who they think might serve as appropriate advisors. Thereafter, it is expected that each student will have at least one advisor of record, who will be responsible each semester for evaluating them, subsequent to the submission of their Bi-Annual Progress

Reports. Students will often continue working with the advisor of their first-year research project during the subsequent year and beyond. In other cases, a useful and positive outcome of this project may be the realization that students' interests lie elsewhere, and so students should always feel that it is appropriate to explore alternative advising relationships. Students may switch laboratories and advisors when such moves make sense for their evolving interests and plans, if a more appropriate faculty member is willing to assume the responsibilities as advisor. Students considering such possibilities are encouraged to discuss them with the involved faculty members, as well as the DGS. To change advisors, students must (a) document that the original advisor and the DGS have been informed and/or consulted about the change, (b) document that the new advisor formally accepts the student as an advisee, and (c) file this documentation with the Departmental Registrar.

Evaluation

Students obtain valuable information about their research progress and plans when multiple faculty read their First Year Research Papers. As such, two faculty members in addition to the student's advisor will read the Paper and provide evaluative comments. Students may request which two additional faculty they would like to evaluate their Papers, although the final decision on additional readers will be made by the DGS. Such requests should be submitted by email to the DGS by April 25th, and students should have secured agreements to read their First Year Research Papers from the requested faculty members before submitting their names.

The Pre-Dissertation Paper

In the second year, students are expected to form a Pre-Dissertation Committee and to submit a Pre-Dissertation Proposal (both near the beginning of their 3rd semester), and to submit a Pre-Dissertation Paper (near the end of their 4th semester). Work performed for the First-Year Project may be included, but in all cases **the Pre-Dissertation paper must reflect additional substantive work beyond the First-Year Project.**

Formation of the Pre-Dissertation Committee

The Pre-Dissertation Paper must be approved by a 3-person faculty committee. At least 2 of the 3 faculty must have their primary appointment in the Psychology Department, and the student's primary advisor is always a member of the committee. This committee evaluates the Pre-Dissertation Proposal and eventually the Pre-Dissertation Paper (described below), and also provides students with feedback concerning their overall progress and course of study. Students should form their Predissertation Committee in consultation with their primary advisor, discussions with other faculty, and, when appropriate, discussions with the DGS. Once students have asked the 3 members of this committee to participate, and they have agreed, they should record these decisions via submission of the **Predissertation Committee form** (presented as **Appendix B** of this Document). This form must be turned into the departmental Registrar during the 3rd semester, along with their Pre-Dissertation Proposal (as described below).

Pre-Dissertation Proposal

Students must submit a short Pre-Dissertation Proposal for the research that will form the foundation of their Pre-Dissertation Paper. This proposal is due near the beginning of the 2nd year. It should take the form of a **2-4 page double-spaced summary** of the proposed research project, including descriptions of the theoretical questions, the procedures, a tentative timeline, and discussions of possible problems that may be encountered. Students should consult their primary research advisor for discussion of any special content or format for the proposal that might be well-matched to the project itself. The Pre-Dissertation proposal, signed by the primary advisor, is submitted to the Departmental Registrar and also to each member of the student's Pre-Dissertation Committee. The committee members will subsequently provide feedback regarding the project's nature, breadth, and feasibility, its likely suitability for a Pre-Dissertation Paper, its compatibility with both faculty resources and with the student's long-term goals. Of course, as the research itself progresses, students may find that their plans are diverging from those initially reported in the Pre-Dissertation Proposal. This is common and expected, but in such cases **the student should consult with their Pre-Dissertation Committee about their evolving plans** as they change, in

particular about their suitability for the Pre-Dissertation Paper.

Format and Content of the Pre-Dissertation Paper

To a first approximation, the content and format of the Pre-Dissertation Paper are identical to those of the First-Year Research Paper, as described above. In many cases, the project itself will be a continuation of the First-Year project; in some cases, the project may be completely independent, and/or conducted with a new faculty advisor. **Reports of pilot data collection or null results** are acceptable. It is expected, however, that the research reported in the Pre-Dissertation Paper will be **deeper and more intensive than that reported in the First-Year project**, reflecting the accumulation of research experience; this is regardless of whether the topics of both papers are continuous or not. And in contrast to the requirements for the First-Year Research Paper, **the project must be one for which the student is a lead investigator**, and the resulting paper must report a completed project. The primary purpose of this requirement is that the paper demonstrate that the student can professionally and competently employ the research methods of his or her chosen specialty, and can clearly communicate the rationale, methods, results, and interpretation/conclusions. As with the First-Year Research Paper, reports of data collected during students' undergraduate careers are *not* acceptable. (Exceptions may apply, for example in the case of national datasets being submitted to substantial secondary analyses. Students should consult their Pre-Dissertation Committees regarding the appropriateness of such options.) Students should consult frequently with their faculty advisor and with their Pre-Dissertation Committee concerning the evolving nature of their research, and its suitability for a Pre-Dissertation Paper.

Submission of Published or In-Press Papers for the Pre-Dissertation Requirement

As noted above, **an ability to publish the results of the Pre-Dissertation project is not required**; null results, incomplete studies, and careful replications are all sufficient. However, **the publication of a research paper may also be a sufficient condition for satisfying the Pre-Dissertation Paper requirement**. Such papers should be published or accepted for publication in a journal of sufficient quality (as determined by the student's Predissertation Committee), and should report **research for which the student was the lead investigator** (and thus presumably the first author), and which was **conducted since the student joined the graduate program at Yale**.

Due Dates

The Pre-Dissertation Committee form and the Pre-Dissertation Proposal (signed by the primary advisor) must both be submitted no later than October 1st, shortly after the beginning of the 3rd semester. The form should be submitted to the Departmental Registrar. The Proposal itself should be submitted both to the Departmental Registrar and to each of the members of the Committee. Students should consult with their faculty advisor about appropriate timelines for completing the initial drafts of the proposal before it goes to the full Committee.

The Pre-Dissertation Paper itself should be turned into the Departmental Registrar and to each member of the Pre-Dissertation Committee no later than April 1st of the student's fourth semester. The faculty advisor will likely wish to review drafts and suggest revisions to the document before this due date, so students should consult with them about appropriate timelines for completing initial drafts

An evaluation of the Pre-Dissertation Paper will be prepared by the Pre-Dissertation Committee, and will be communicated to the student by April 15th. The final approved version of the Pre-Dissertation Paper — signed (on the cover page) by the project's faculty advisor to indicate the Committee's approval — must then be turned into the Departmental Registrar no later than May 10th.

Course Registration

While conducting this research, and preparing the Pre-Dissertation Paper during the second year, students should again register for "**Pre-Dissertation Research**" — **PSYC 930a** (during the fall semester) and **PSYC 930b** (during the spring semester). (This is true even for those students whose First-Year Research Papers were approved as Pre-Dissertation Papers at the end of their first year.)

Departmental Approval of Continuation Beyond the 2nd Year

In order for students to remain in the program beyond their second year, **the faculty must vote to approve their continuation** (as is the case each year). This evaluation of students is based on their records and progress in the program to date, informed by the first four Bi-Annual Progress Reports, as well as by the First-Year Research Paper and the Pre-Dissertation Paper. This decision is also based on the faculty's judgment about the student's potential for independent research. Passing each of the basic requirements listed below in the first two years is necessary but not always sufficient evidence of such potential.

Basic Requirements

The basic requirements for departmental approval of continuation beyond the 2nd year are:

Coursework

Satisfactory completion of a minimum of 3 basic (500-level) courses, two of which must be outside the student's area of concentration (and in different areas), as well as a course on Data Analysis (PSYC 518a, required in the first semester).

A student who wants to take a 600-level psychology course as a core course may approach the instructor to ask if the instructor will provide additional readings or assignments, beyond what is required for the whole class, for it to have the breadth and foundational content to count as a core course for that student. Instructors are not required to make such accommodations for students. If the faculty member is willing to offer additional work to a student so that the 600-level course may qualify as a core course, the arrangement should be made clear in writing to the student (with copies of the arrangement sent to the department Director of Graduate Studies and to the department Registrar). The written record of the arrangement must include (a) how the list of readings will be broadened (if necessary); (b) what additional work for the student will be required, (c) how mastery of the additional material will be evaluated (e.g., a couple of additional questions on an exam, an additional paper); and (d) what core area the course fulfills. These arrangements must be made and formalized in writing within three weeks of the first day of classes for the semester and must be supported by the Director of Graduate Studies.

First-Year Research and Pre-Dissertation Papers

Completion of the First-Year Research Paper (as judged to be satisfactory by the project advisor) and of the Pre-Dissertation Paper (as judged to be satisfactory by the Pre-dissertation Committee)

Honors Certification

Fulfillment of the Graduate School requirement of grades of *Honors* in at least two full (500- or 600-level) courses.

A Positive Faculty Vote

The final determination of each student's ability to continue in the program beyond the second year is by a majority vote of the faculty at the time of the spring evaluation meeting, near the end of the academic year.

Appeal Procedures

If the faculty votes not to allow a student to continue in the program, and the student wishes to appeal the decision, he or she should discuss this with the DGS to determine what options are available, as specified by the Graduate School regulations. The DGS can inform and advise the student on the best course of action. A significant step in the appeal process is that the student must submit a letter of appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Dean may indicate to the DGS what, if any, further faculty action is required, but the final decision rests with the Dean.

Petitioning for an MS Degree

The semester after the successful completion of the 2nd year, a student may petition for an MS degree. Petitions to receive the degree in December are due in early October. Petitions to receive the degree in May are due in mid-March. Petition forms are available online at:

http://gsas.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files-forms/degree_petition_en_route_and_terminal_1.pdf

Theme Essay

The first of two primary requirements during the 3rd year — and the primary step following the Pre-Dissertation Paper — is the submission of the Theme Essay, due near the end of the 5th semester.

Purpose

The Graduate School requires all students to complete a qualifying exam as part of their training, and satisfactory completion of this requirement is also necessary to obtain either the *Master of Philosophy* or *Doctor of Philosophy* degree. **The Theme Essay serves as the qualifying exam for the Department of Psychology.**

Content and Format

The Theme Essay presents a scholarly overview of the state of knowledge and of the major approaches to research within the student's chosen research area. Thus, the focus of the Theme Essay is more specific than 'Psychology' as a whole, but it is broader than the dissertation topic. In this sense, **a primary function of the Theme Essay is to demonstrate the student's breadth of competence, beyond the specific questions and approaches of the dissertation.** The Theme Essay is designed to maximize flexibility and student self-determination, and it can be written in a wide variety of formats. The only formal requirement for its format and content is that these features be approved by the student's Theme Essay Committee, and different formats may be more or less appropriate for different students and projects. Examples of possible formats include (but are not limited to) a review paper or a handbook chapter. If a student has written a collaborative paper (e.g. a published literature review or book chapter) that may match the purpose of the Theme Essay, they should talk to their Committee about whether it may be acceptable, given that this requirement is an opportunity for the faculty to assess the student's own thinking and writing.

Theme Essay Committee

The Theme Essay is evaluated by a 3-member faculty committee. This committee may include all, some, or none of the same individuals who served on the student's Pre-dissertation Committee. Students should contact faculty ahead of time to verify their ability to serve on the committee; the committee membership itself is documented on the Theme Essay Certification Form (presented as **Appendix C** of this document). The same constraints on the membership of this committee as on the Pre-Dissertation Committee apply. Because there is no separate Theme Essay Proposal, **students should consult with each member of their Theme Essay Committee about the content of their Theme Essay** throughout the course of the 5th semester.

Course Registration

Students should register for **PSYC 923a** ("Theme Essay") during their 5th semester.

Due Dates

A full draft of the Theme Essay, approved by the student's primary advisor, should be submitted to the Committee for review no later than **December 1st** of the 5th semester. The Committee will read, evaluate, and suggest revisions to the document. The final version of the Theme Essay, **approved by all Committee members**, must be submitted (along with the Theme Essay Certification Form, presented as **Appendix C** in this document) no later than **February 1st** of the 6th semester. Students should consult with their primary advisor on an appropriate timeline for completing an initial draft of their Theme Essay for their advisor's review, prior to its submission to the Committee.

Dissertation Prospectus

The **second primary requirement for the 3rd year** of the graduate program is the production and evaluation of the Dissertation Prospectus, during the 6th semester. The purpose of the Prospectus is to **formalize a plan for the dissertation**, and to receive feedback on it from the student's Dissertation Committee.

Content

The Dissertation Prospectus should summarize the proposed dissertation research, including:

- A concise review of the relevant literature, describing the historical and theoretical context
- Descriptions of the theoretical questions and hypotheses
- Descriptions of the methods to be used
- Descriptions of the likely analytic techniques to be used
- Descriptions of the possible outcomes and their theoretical implications
- Discussions of potential problems that may be encountered, and how they will be dealt with
- A tentative timeline for the conduct of the research

Students should consult their primary research advisor for discussion on any special content or format for the proposal that might be well-matched to the project itself.

The proposed dissertation research itself need not involve any particular methods, and its nature will be dictated by the underlying research questions. The only formal requirement for the proposed research is that it be approved by the Dissertation Committee. It is expected, however, that **the scope of the proposed research will be considerably greater** than that reported in the Pre-Dissertation Paper, in terms of (a) the amount of research to be conducted, (b) the completeness with which the underlying questions and phenomena are actually pinned down and thoroughly explored and explained; and (c) the importance of the research as a contribution to the field of psychology as a whole. A dissertation may include the student's Pre-Dissertation project if the Dissertation Committee approves.

Dissertation Prospectus Meeting

The Dissertation Prospectus will be evaluated by a 3-person Dissertation Committee. This committee may include all, some, or none of the same individuals who served on the student's Pre-dissertation Committee. Students should contact faculty ahead of time to verify their ability to serve on the committee; the committee membership itself is documented on the Dissertation Prospectus Certification Form (presented as **Appendix D** of this document). On the basis of the prospectus, the committee will provide feedback regarding the project's nature, scope, feasibility, and likely suitability for a Ph.D. dissertation — as well as its compatibility with faculty resources, trends in the field as a whole, and the student's own long-term goals. **This feedback will be communicated during a formal meeting with the student**, and this meeting must occur prior to the formal submission of the Prospectus to the department and to the Graduate School.

The constitution of the Dissertation Committee should be discussed with the student's primary research advisor. It is also worth noting that the Dissertation itself will be reviewed by the Dissertation Committee plus two additional Readers (the "5-person" committee), and that in some circumstances students or their advisors may wish to add a 4th or 5th member — eventual Reader(s) — to the Dissertation Committee at this stage. In any case, students should keep those additional faculty members who may eventually be asked to serve as Readers informed of their plans and progress.

Two Different Formats

In almost all cases, the Dissertation Prospectus itself will take two formats. The first format is **a longer version intended for review by the Dissertation Committee. Students should consult their primary advisor and their Committee as a whole for guidance on the optimal length and format of this document**, but it should be sufficient to concisely convey all of the information noted above. This will frequently result in documents that are

between 10 and 25 double-spaced pages.¹

A more concise version of the Dissertation Prospectus must also be **submitted to the Graduate School** as part of their formal requirements. This version must be **no more than 7 double-spaced pages**, and should be a crystallized version of the longer Prospectus. (Note that this shorter version would almost never be sufficient to allow for a full Dissertation Committee review, whereas the longer version does not meet the Graduate School's archival requirements for Dissertation Prospecti.) This version may also be **less technical than the version submitted for review to the Dissertation Committee**, and should be comprehensible to Deans and to faculty in other Departments.

Due Dates

There are two relevant due dates for the Dissertation Prospectus. **The initial (longer) version** of the Prospectus must be submitted to each member of the Committee no later than April 15th of the 6th semester. Then, **two copies of the final (shorter) version** must be submitted to the departmental Registrar — along with **the completed Dissertation Prospectus Certification form** (included in this document as **Appendix D**), signed by each member of the Dissertation Committee — no later than June 1st of the 6th semester. In between those two due dates, the student should hold their formal **Dissertation Prospectus meeting** by May 15th, during which the Dissertation Committee will convey their feedback and perhaps suggest revisions. The student should consult with the Committee on the best date for this meeting, balancing (a) sufficient time for the members to read and evaluate the longer Prospectus (and for the primary advisor to read and evaluate the shorter version) with (b) sufficient time for the student to implement any required revisions. **The student should take charge of setting this meeting up ahead of time, preferably by initiating planning in early April.**

Admission to Candidacy

The policy of the Graduate School regarding “admission to candidacy” for the Ph.D. degree now states that students must be formally admitted to candidacy **by the end of their 3rd year** of study. At that time, the student must have completed all pre-dissertation requirements and must have submitted an approved dissertation prospectus. **Students who have failed to complete this requirement are not allowed to register for a seventh semester.**

Post-Prospectus Revisions to Dissertation Plans

Students will commonly find that their plans for dissertation research evolve after their Dissertation Prospectus is approved and after they are advanced to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree. Sometimes these changes will be relatively minor, and sometimes they will be substantive (e.g. when a certain experiment or method fails). Such changes are to some degree an inevitable part of research, since the trajectory of scientific projects can never be fully predicted ahead of time. **When such changes occur, whatever their scope, students are strongly advised to consult closely with their Dissertation Committee about how the changes will affect the project’s nature, scope, timing, and likely suitability for a Ph.D. dissertation.** Many potentially serious problems at the final stage of evaluation can be avoided by continuing discussion with the Dissertation Committee when plans change.

Dissertation Committee Progress Review Meetings

Students will meet with their 3-Person Dissertation Committee, normally in the spring but no later than May 15th, annually from their fourth year on, until the academic year in which their 5-Person Committee meets. The purpose of this meeting is to review progress on the dissertation, to provide feedback on post-prospectus revisions to dissertation plans, and, if the student desires, to discuss possible new revisions. This meeting can occur in different ways, such as in a meeting devoted solely to this purpose or with Dissertation Committee members attending a lab group meeting in which the dissertation work is presented or discussed. The student will receive written feedback, with input from all Committee members, based on that meeting.

¹ Students who matriculated before 2008 may note that this estimate is longer than was the case under the previous graduate requirements. This is due to the fact that the previous *Dissertation Area Paper* requirement has been eliminated, and its content integrated with the Prospectus.

The Ph.D. Dissertation

The written culmination of a student's graduate career is their Ph.D. dissertation. The conduct of the research underlying the dissertation, as well as the preparation of the dissertation itself, constitutes that primary task of students during their final years of graduate study.

Dissertation Content

The format of the Ph.D. Dissertation is flexible, and should be chosen in consultation with the primary research advisor, based on the nature of the project itself. One possibility is to produce a **single report, divided into chapters**, with each following from the other in a single narrative. This possibility corresponds to the traditional model for a Ph.D. dissertation. A disadvantage of this model is that the dissertation typically diverges from the typical format of scientific publications; as a result, considerable revision may then be needed in order to rework the dissertation for eventual publication (often in a series of smaller reports).

A second model for the Dissertation is to produce a **series of largely independent research papers ('chapters'), bracketed by an appropriate Introduction and General Discussion**. This model has a potential disadvantage in that it less readily supports a long and complex narrative of the sort that may be required to explain some phenomena. An advantage of this model, however, is that it more closely matches the current practices of scientific publication, since each 'chapter' can be submitted for publication largely as-is. **In some cases, chapters of the dissertation will be papers already published or in-press** (suitably reformatted and cited). In this case, however, it is expected that the Introduction and General Discussion of the dissertation will discuss the larger context and the theoretical picture that binds each chapter together. For example, whereas the chapters may primarily be reports of empirical findings, the Introduction and/or General Discussion could provide the basis for a review paper or commentary on a theoretical issue.

There are also other possible dissertation models. Students are encouraged to discuss possibilities with relevant faculty, and to review the Departmental archive of previous dissertations (especially recent ones). In the end, **the only formal requirement for the format of the dissertation** is that it be approved by the student's 5-person Dissertation committee (as described below). In all cases, however, **the Ph.D. dissertation constitutes a substantial and innovative research contribution to the field of Psychology, and it comprehensively explores and explains its chosen topic**.

Dissertation Formatting

Unless otherwise agreed upon by a student's 5-person dissertation committee, the manuscript itself should be **formatted according to APA rules**, except that **footnotes, tables, and figures should be inserted into the text** at the appropriate points, rather than being collected at the end of the manuscript.

5-Person Dissertation Meeting

The Ph.D. Dissertation is reviewed by a Committee consisting of 5 faculty members (the Dissertation Committee and two additional Readers).

Formation and Constitution of 5-Person Dissertation Committees

5-person dissertation committees must be formed according the following 5 constraints:

1. The student's primary research advisor will be a member of the committee.
2. At least two members of the committee must be faculty within the student's home departmental 'area'.

3. At least one member of the committee must be from outside the student's home departmental 'area'.
4. One member of the committee who is a primary faculty member in the Psychology department but who is *not* the primary advisor should serve as Chair of the committee and should run both the 5-person Meeting and the Oral Examination, as described below.
5. The majority of the committee (i.e., at least 3 members) must be primary faculty in the Psychology Department.

Typically, 3 of the 5 members of the Dissertation Committee will be members of the Committee that approved the dissertation prospectus, though sometimes changes are appropriate. When desirable and feasible, experts from other departments or universities may be included as committee members, so long as the constraints above are satisfied. Three of the five committee members will also serve as 'Readers' of the dissertation, and must submit Readers' Reports to the Graduate School following the Oral Examination. Though students and their advisors should collaborate to decide on the appropriate membership of the committee, note that the DGS has final approval of the committee members. The constitution of the full 5-Person Dissertation Committee must be submitted for review via the 5-Person Dissertation Committee Formation form (included in this document as **Appendix E**). This form must be submitted and approved by the DGS before the 5-person committee can meet.

Scheduling

It is expected that the dissertation will first be reviewed (perhaps several times) by the primary research advisor. When the student and the advisor deem the dissertation to be complete and ready for review, the student should contact their 5-Person committee to schedule the first meeting.² This meeting, unlike parts of the Oral Examination, is private, and is attended only by the student and by the 5 committee members. The meeting typically lasts between 1 ½ to 2 hours. **It is expected that the student will submit complete copies of the dissertation to each member of the committee no later than 1 week prior to the 5-person meeting.** Students are encouraged to contact individual committee members to ascertain whether they prefer electronic or printed copies (or both). Students may also choose (but are not required) to **convene their Committee for an initial meeting** prior to the official 5-Person meeting, if they desire feedback from the full Committee on the project before the dissertation is completed. This initial meeting could provide guidance on how to complete the project, but cannot replace the official 5-Person meeting if the dissertation itself is not complete.

Format

The objective of the five-person meeting is to advise the candidate on the status of the dissertation, as well as to informally evaluate the student's grasp of the material and of the surrounding literature. At the beginning of the meeting, the committee may ask the student to leave the room while they have an initial brief discussion about the status of the dissertation. The student will then be invited back into the room, and the committee will proceed to offer suggestions and to ask questions. The format of this part of the meeting can be decided by the committee as a whole, with the Chair tasked with running the meeting and keeping track of time. Students will typically not be asked to make presentations during this meeting, but they may wish to have potentially useful materials available, such as figures, analyses, demonstrations, etc. Near the end of the meeting, the student will again be asked to leave the room, and the committee will discuss the dissertation and their recommendations. As part of this discussion, the Committee will vote on whether the student has passed the meeting, and is ready to proceed to their Oral Examination; each member on the committee will have one vote for this purpose. The student will then be invited back into the room, and the Chair will convey the outcome of the meeting.

² Students are responsible for scheduling these meetings, and should stay aware of other salient scheduling constraints – especially the large number of 5-person meetings and Oral Examinations that tend to cluster near to the degree deadlines imposed by the Graduate School. The most efficient way to schedule these meetings is to first canvas faculty about general timeframes, and then to forward a list of possible days and times to the full committee via email. Each committee member can then remove those days/times when they cannot meet from the list, and then forward the result to the rest of the committee. After each faculty member has responded, the remaining list will consist of dates and times that work for everyone.

Possible Outcomes

In unusual cases, the committee may approve the written dissertation as-is, and require no revisions prior to the Oral Examination. More commonly, the committee will request various revisions to the dissertation. These required revisions could be relatively minor, or could involve extensive rewriting and/or additional discussions. In the most unusual cases, the committee may conclude that the dissertation will not be acceptable, no matter how rewritten, and that further data collection is required. (Students can help to avoid this outcome by keeping their committee members informed as to the nature and progress of their work as it evolves.) Committees may require that such revisions be submitted and re-evaluated prior to the Oral Examination, or may (in the case of relatively minor revisions) allow students to complete the final changes after the Oral Examination. When changes are minimal, the committee may decide to deputize the primary advisor to evaluate and approve the final edits.

It is up to this committee not only to evaluate the written dissertation, but also to approve the student's status as ready to proceed to their Oral Examination. If the committee has serious concerns about the work, and/or if extensive or important revisions are required, the committee may require an additional (i.e., second) private 5-person meeting before the Oral Examination. In terms of scheduling, this possibility can never be ruled out until the initial 5-person meeting itself is actually held. (If necessary, the committee could require multiple interim private meetings before they certify that the student is ready for the Oral Examination.)

5-Person Meeting Minutes

The candidate is required to take minutes of the meeting(s) and to subsequently submit them in writing to all members of the five-person committee and to the departmental Registrar. This is intended to prevent misunderstandings regarding the nature of recommendations and required changes. These minutes should be submitted no later than one week after the 5-person meeting. Committee members will have the opportunity to respond to the written minutes by clarifying issues they raised or requests they made for changes to the written dissertation. Students should not proceed with modifications to the dissertation until all committee members have approved the revised written minutes.

Requests to Study *In Absentia*

The Graduate School requires that graduate students be in residence for a minimum of 3 years during their Ph.D. program (see <http://gsas.yale.edu/sites/default/files/file-future/viewbook.pdf>). Occasionally students who have completed this residency requirement in their first three years, and who have completed the departmental requirements through the theme essay and dissertation prospectus, may wish to spend part of their fourth or fifth years living away from Yale while continuing to work on their dissertations. This is referred to as *studying in absentia*. This is to be distinguished from *studying abroad*, which is when students travel to a location away from Yale specifically for the purpose of gathering data or learning new techniques that are essential to their research. In contrast, students who are studying in absentia are simply living away from Yale while continuing to work on their dissertations.

The faculty of the Psychology Department, while understanding the individual reasons that lead some students to wish to study in absentia, strongly discourage it for several reasons. A good deal of a graduate education comes from interacting with faculty and other students on a daily basis in lab meetings, lunch meetings, colloquia, and informal meetings. Students who are away from Yale cannot fully benefit from these intellectual exchanges, nor are they contributing fully to the intellectual community at Yale. In addition, it is more difficult for advisors to supervise students who are not on site, particularly if they are still collecting data for their dissertations. Again, it is in the context of informal interchanges between advisors and students that problems in research design, implementation or analysis are often detected and solved, and other important issues dealt with. Students who are absent from Yale may meet with their advisors electronically on a regular basis, but they do not benefit from the substantial advising (and opportunities to mentor fellow students) that occur informally when they are on site. As a result, requests to study in absentia will be approved only in extraordinary circumstances, and it should not be justified primarily by a student's wishes to work away from Yale for personal reasons. Students wishing to make

such a request should first discuss this request with their advisors and dissertation committees. Then they should submit a written request to the faculty (including a letter of invitation describing the opportunities and resources available to the student at the potential host institution). When the request is for a year in which funding from Yale is provided, the request will be discussed and voted on at a full faculty meeting. University approval is also required to study *in absentia*.

Oral Examination

The Oral Examination, unlike the initial 5-Person meeting, is in part a public departmental event, attended by the student, his or her 5-person committee, other interested faculty and students, friends, and family.³ **Oral Examinations are required for all students, regardless of the outcome of the initial 5-person committee meeting, and regardless of how recently they may have given other forms of departmental talks.** The Oral Examination is the culmination of a student's career as a graduate student, and (along with the formal Graduate School commencement ceremony) it marks an important transition in the student's academic career.

Format

Oral Examinations will be run by the Chair of the student's 5-Person committee (who, as a reminder, can be any primary faculty member in the Psychology Department who is on the committee *except* the student's primary research advisor). With possible minor variations, the Examination will proceed through the following steps, with the Chair in charge of timing:

1. The student will give a brief (~ 20-30 minute) overview presentation of his or her dissertation research.
2. The audience will then have an opportunity to ask questions of the student. (Committee members will typically not ask questions during this time.)
3. The committee and the student will then meet in a private session. During this time, the committee members may ask the student additional questions about the dissertation research, and offer additional suggestions.
4. The committee will then meet in private to determine the outcome of the meeting, and whether the student has passed the Oral Examination (with each member of the committee having one vote). This private meeting typically occurs with the student and their friends and family waiting nearby.
5. The committee will announce the decision to the student and other interested parties, after which celebration may ensue.

Possible Outcomes

Whenever possible, 5-person committees and students should not go into the Oral Examination while serious reservations about the dissertation (or about the student's ability to present it) remain. Instead, the committee should request an additional private 5-person meeting prior to the Oral Defense, during which those reservations can be further evaluated and discussed. It is expected that the written Dissertation itself will be approved (perhaps subject to final minor required revisions, which may be verified by the primary research advisor) before the Oral Examination begins. If, at the conclusion of the meeting, the 5-Person Committee decides that the Oral Examination was unacceptable, the following alternatives exist. First, the Committee may require additional written material to be submitted and approved before the student is certified as having passed the Oral Examination. (This could be the case, for example, when the student's discussion of certain issues or responses to certain questions during the Oral Examination was judged to be insufficient.) Second, the Committee may require further private meetings, or (in unusual cases) a second public Oral Examination before the student is certified as

³ Oral Examinations have always been open in principle to other members of the community, but attendance beyond the 5-person committee was rare in recent years. As of 2008, **we are strongly encouraging all interested parties to attend these meetings!**

having passed the Oral Examination. In these cases, the student may not be able to have the degree conferred on the expected date.

Scheduling

Students are responsible for scheduling the Oral Examination, via the same procedures as the initial 5-Person Committee meeting. Because the meeting is public, however, several constraints and opportunities should be investigated. **Often, it may be convenient for students to hold their Oral Examinations during open area “Lunch” talk slots, though this is not required.** (Coordinators of these talk series should keep these possibilities in mind, and perhaps save some slots for this purpose.) Other convenient slots are unused faculty-meeting and Departmental Colloquium slots. Students at this stage are encouraged to consult the Departmental Registrar for those times and rooms that may be free or used during various times. **A version of the Dissertation approved for the public defense by the 5-Person Committee must be available to the Committee members and to other interested faculty members at least one week before the public defense.**

Procedures for Submitting Dissertations to the Graduate School

Formatting

Specific instructions for formatting and submitting the completed approved Dissertation to the Graduate School can be viewed or downloaded online, at:

<http://gsas.yale.edu/academics/dissertations/submission-process>

Graduate School Deadlines

The deadlines for submitting the dissertation to the Graduate School and petitioning for the Ph.D. are March 15th for degrees formally conferred in May, and October 1st for degrees formally conferred in December. (Commencement ceremonies, however, are normally held only in May.) Students should consult with faculty about the various roles that these deadlines do and do not play. (For example, they are required to avoid certain fees and in order to participate in the commencement ceremonies themselves, but the formal conferral of the degree is not typically required in order for students to begin postdoctoral fellowships, faculty jobs, or other positions. In these cases, the Department Chair or DGS can certify in writing that the student has completed all work related to the Ph.D. requirements, and is simply awaiting formal degree conferral.)

Appendix A: Bi-Annual Progress Report Form

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Ongoing Projects [Note collaborators and provide 1 sentence describing project status]

Publications [Cumulative]

Manuscripts Under Review

Manuscripts in Preparation

Conference Presentations [Cumulative]

Other Presentations [Cumulative; include guest lectures, lunch talks, etc.]

Award/Honors [Cumulative]

TF Assignments [Cumulative; include course #, instructor, semester, TF credit]

Classes [Cumulative; include course #, instructor, semester, grade]

Most Significant Accomplishments during the Past Semester

Most Salient Opportunities for Improvement during the Past Semester

Next Goals

Areas of Desired Additional Mentorship or Training

Appendix B: Pre-Dissertation Committee Form

Reminders

At least 2 of the 3 faculty must have their primary appointment in the Psychology Department, and the student's primary advisor is always a member of the committee. Students should consult with each member of the committee and assess their ability to serve on the committee before submitting this form.

Due Date

This form, along with the Pre-Dissertation Proposal (signed by the primary advisor) must be submitted to the Departmental Registrar no later than October 1st of the 3rd semester.

Student's Name : _____

Date : _____

Pre-Dissertation Committee Members

<u>Role</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Primary Psych. Faculty?</u>
Main Advisor	_____	_____
Second Member	_____	_____
Third Member	_____	_____

Appendix C: Theme Essay Certification Form

Reminders

At least 2 of the 3 faculty must have their primary appointment in the Psychology Department, and the student's primary advisor is always a member of the committee. This committee may include all, some, or none of the same individuals who served on the student's Pre-Dissertation Committee. Students should contact faculty ahead of time to verify their ability to serve on this committee, and then must obtain each faculty member's signature on this form to verify their approval of the Theme Essay.

Due Date

A full draft of the Theme Essay, approved by the student's primary advisor, should be submitted to the Committee for review no later than **December 1st** of the 5th semester. The Committee will read, evaluate, and suggest revisions to the document. The final version of the Theme Essay, **approved by all Committee members**, must be submitted along with this Form, no later than **February 1st** of the 6th semester.

Student's Name : _____

Date : _____

Theme Essay Title : _____

Theme Essay Committee Signatures

The signatures below indicate approval of the student's theme essay.

<u>Role</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Signature</u>	<u>Primary Faculty?</u>
Main Advisor	_____	_____	_____
Second Member	_____	_____	_____
Third Member	_____	_____	_____

Appendix D: Dissertation Prospectus Certification Form

Reminders

At least 2 of the 3 faculty must have their primary appointment in the Psychology Department, and the student's primary advisor is always a member of the group. This committee may include all, some, or none of the same individuals who served on the student's Pre-dissertation and Theme Essay Committees. Students should contact faculty ahead of time to verify their ability to serve on this committee, and then must obtain each faculty member's signature on this form to verify their approval of the Dissertation Prospectus. It is also worth noting that the Dissertation itself will be reviewed by the Dissertation Committee plus two additional Readers (the "5-person" committee), and that in some circumstances students or their advisors may wish to add a 4th or 5th member — eventual Reader(s) — to the Dissertation Committee at this stage. In any case, students should keep those additional faculty members who may eventually be asked to serve as Readers apprised of their plans and progress.

Due Date

The initial (longer) version of the Prospectus must be submitted to each member of the Committee no later than April 15th of the 6th semester. Then, two copies of the final (shorter) version must be submitted to the Departmental Registrar along with this form, signed by each member of the Dissertation Committee, no later than June 1st of the 6th semester.

Student's Name : _____

Date : _____

Prospectus Title : _____

Dissertation Committee Signatures

The signatures below indicate approval of the student's Dissertation Prospectus.

<u>Role</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Signature</u>	<u>Primary Faculty?</u>
Main Advisor	_____	_____	_____
Second Member	_____	_____	_____
Third Member	_____	_____	_____

Appendix E: 5-Person Dissertation Committee Form

Reminders

5-person Dissertation Committees must meet the following constraints: (1) The primary research advisor will be a member. (2) At least two members (often but not necessarily including the advisor) must be from the student's home departmental 'area'. (3) At least one member must be from outside the student's home departmental 'area'. (4) One member who is a primary faculty member in the Psychology department but who is *not* the primary advisor should serve as Chair of the committee and should run both the 5-person Meeting and the Oral Examination. (5) The majority of the committee (i.e., at least 3 members) must be primary faculty in the Psychology Department. Typically, 3 of the 5 members will be members of the Committee that approved the dissertation prospectus, though sometimes changes are appropriate. When desirable and feasible, experts from other departments or universities may be included as committee members, so long as the constraints above are satisfied. 3 of the 5 members must also serve as 'Readers', submitting Readers' Reports to the Graduate School after the Oral Examination. Though students and their advisors should collaborate to decide on the appropriate membership, note that the DGS has final approval of the committee members.

Due Date

This form must be submitted and approved by the DGS before the 5-person committee can meet.

Student's Name : _____

Date : _____

Dissertation Title : _____

5-Person Dissertation Committee Signatures

List each committee member's name below, check the appropriate lines under the "Primary Faculty?" and "Home Area?" columns, and then **circle the names** of the three members who will serve as Readers.

<u>Role</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Signature</u>	<u>Primary Faculty?</u>	<u>Home Area?</u>
Main Advisor	_____	_____	_____	_____
Committee Chair	_____	_____	X	_____
Third Member	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fourth Member	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fifth Member	_____	_____	_____	_____