

Objectives and Requirements (Fall 2006)

Ph.D. Program in Life-Span Developmental Psychology

The University of Georgia

The doctoral program in Life-Span Developmental Psychology (LSDP) is designed to produce professionals with careers in academic settings as teacher-researchers or in non-academic settings, conducting research on issues of developmental psychological relevance (e.g., survey, health). The program is flexible enough to allow students to pursue their own interests and develop their own talents. Still, all graduates will master the important substantive areas of developmental psychology and to acquire a high level of research expertise. Students are expected to maintain continuous, active involvement in research throughout their stay.

Life-Span Developmental Psychology is a prime meeting ground for disciplines in the behavioral, social, and biomedical sciences, and we strongly encourage collaboration across disciplines. The LSDP draws added support from other departments at the University of Georgia, such as Child and Family Development, Educational Psychology, the Gerontology Center, the Institute for Behavioral Research, and Health Sciences.

Program Time Frames

The program is designed so that students can complete all requirements for both the M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in four years.

1. First year students complete their thesis prospectus by the beginning of their second year in the program.
2. Requirements for the M.S. degree are completed by the end of the second year in the program.
3. Written and oral preliminary comprehensive examinations are completed by the end of the third year (i.e., in Spring semester if the student entered in the Fall semester).
4. The doctoral dissertation will be completed by the end of the fourth year of enrollment.

Financial Assistance

Although financial support is not guaranteed from year to year, historically, virtually all students have been supported throughout their graduate career. The principal sources of funds are:

1. Teaching assistantships awarded annually by the Department. Program faculty rank order students for the assistantships based, in part, on graduate GPA, rate of

- progress through the program, years of prior support, and particular abilities or training required for the assignment.
2. The Graduate School awards a limited number of research assistantships on a highly competitive basis (e.g., based on high GRE, GPA, and research productivity). Eligible students are nominated for these by the programs and the department.
 3. Individual faculty in the LSDP may have research grants or contracts that provide research assistantships.
 4. Grants and fellowships are available from outside sources (e.g., NSF, NIH). Students are highly encouraged to apply for these sources of funding. Not only are they very prestigious (and look excellent on your vita) but also, they typically provide higher stipends and numerous other benefits (e.g., travel expenses) not available from other sources of funding.

Research Requirements

Continuous, active involvement in research is required of students enrolled in the LSDP. This requirement applies to all students in the program, whether or not they hold a formal research assistantship.

First Year Activities

Admission to the LSDP means that a student has been paired with a specific faculty member who will supervise his/her first year activities. This does not mean that a student is committed to working with his/her first year supervisor throughout the term of graduate study. During their first semester, students have the responsibility to consult with all members of the program faculty and become familiar with their interests, areas of expertise, and ongoing research.

With this information, no later than the beginning of the second semester, students must become involved in a research project and begin work on that project. Again, this does not mean that a student must work with only this faculty member on a permanent basis but, rather, to satisfy the first year research requirement, which may involve:

1. Collaborating with a faculty member in developing interests and original ideas to pursue in future investigations, or
2. Becoming directly involved with an ongoing research project under the supervision of a program faculty member.

Students will formalize their first year research involvement by enrolling in PSYC7000 (Master's Research) during the Fall or Spring semester of their first year. This will ordinarily be a directed readings experience, taken with the research supervisor, in which the student will become familiar with the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological issues that are relevant to his/her chosen research activities or project.

A student can satisfy the first year research requirement with more than one faculty member. Although first year research involvement does **not** permanently bind a student to a particular faculty member or line of research, the student should see any first year commitment through to its conclusion (e.g., stay with a short-term study until all of the data have been collected).

Subsequent Years

Students are expected to be involved in research throughout their graduate training. This is beyond the requirements of the master's thesis and doctoral dissertation. Each student is required to sign up for a minimum of 3 hours of directed readings and research (PSYC 7000 or 9000) under a faculty member in the developmental program at least once each academic year that he/she is on campus. Students may involve themselves in research projects with more than one member of the Psychology faculty, and it is assumed that as a student progresses, a greater proportion of his/her research efforts will be directed toward developing his/her *own* ideas and research agenda.

The Master's Degree

The prime objective of the Master's program is to give students a background in the major areas of general psychology as preparation for more advanced study in our doctoral program. This broad training lessens the hazards of over-specialization. Completion of a research-based Master's thesis also insures that students will have at least one formal research experience before undertaking their dissertation research.

A student enrolled in the LSDP Master's program is required, in consultation with his/her advisor or major professor, to work out a program of study for the M.S. degree acceptable to the student's advisory committee. A minimum of 24 credit hours of course work together with a minimum of 6 hours of independent readings and thesis credit (PSYC 7000; PSYC 7300) are required.

The Doctoral Degree

The prime objective of the doctoral program is to train students in a specialized area of developmental psychology. Because the Ph.D. is, in essence, a research degree, all students, even those whose primary interest is in teaching, will develop strong research skills. These skills go beyond knowledge of developmental psychology, statistics, and methodology. They also involve autonomy and generativity. In other words, students will develop the ability to conceptualize psychological issues at a high theoretical level and to conduct competent research testing hypotheses they have generated on their own.

A student enrolled in the Ph.D. program also is required, in consultation with his/her advisor or major professor, to work out a program of study that is acceptable to the student's advisory committee. A minimum of 30 credit hours, including a minimum of 3 hours of dissertation credit (PSYC 9300) are required.

Requirements for the Master's and the Ph.D. degree in developmental psychology are outlined on the next two pages.

The Master's Program in Developmental Psychology

Total of 30 hours required

Statistics

Quant 1	
Quant 2	

Master's Core Courses. In addition to PSYC 6220 (Developmental)), select two from Biopsych, Cognitive, History, Individual Differences, Learning, Psychopathology, Psychometrics, Sensory, Social).

Developmental (PSYC 6220)	

Electives

Thesis Research

PSYC 7000	
PSYC 7000	

Thesis

PSYC 7300	
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NOTE: Students attempting to earn the M.S. degree may challenge specific required courses if the student's advisor approves. This petition would be reviewed by faculty members who regularly teach the course. If the challenge is successful, the student would not have to take that course but would need to substitute another graduate course in order to meet the hours requirement.

The Doctoral Program in Developmental Psychology

Total of 30 hours required

Statistics

Quant 3*	
Quant 4*	

*A student entering the program with a master's degree must either take Quant 1 and Quant 2 prior to taking Quant 3 and Quant 4 or provide evidence that he/she has the equivalent training.

Developmental Courses (Choose four from: Theories of Development, Personality and Social Development, Infant Cognition, Psychology of Health and Illness, Cognitive Development, Cognition and Aging, Memory Development, Individual Differences in Child Cognition, Pediatric Psychology, Psycholinguistics, Psychology of Aging, Comparative Behavioral Development, specialty seminars)

Electives (Any courses 5000 level or above)

Dissertation

PSYC 9300	
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Additional Information About Electives

Students can use their electives in one of two ways:

- 1) A **co-major**, consisting of an integrated set of courses in a cognate area, may be sought in one of the other doctoral programs in the Department of Psychology (e.g., Social Psychology, Neuroscience and Behavior) or in another graduate program (e.g., Child and Family Development, Gerontology). Decisions about particular co-majors will require the joint consent of the student's advisory committee and the departmental committee(s) administering the program(s) in which the co-major is sought. The faculty member representing the substantive area of the co-major who agrees to coordinate the student's program of study for the co-major may expect to serve on the student's doctoral advisory committee.
- 2) Those not electing the co-major option will take at least 6 hours at the master's level and/or 9 hours at the doctoral level in additional graduate level courses (other than PSYC9000 and PSYC9300). These courses may be developmental program offerings (e.g., advanced seminars) or other courses from within or outside the department that the student, in consultation with his/her advisory committee, selects to strengthen his/her program of study.

Preliminary Comprehensive Examinations

After completing the M.S., and prior to being admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D., students demonstrate in written and oral exams their mastery of the information they have acquired in their course work and research.

Written Preliminary Comprehensive Exam

The written preliminary comprehensive exam will consist of a major integrative review of a selected area of developmental psychology. The topic of this review paper must first be approved by the student's doctoral advisory committee. The paper is expected to be comparable in scope and quality to *Psychological Bulletin* papers. The exam will be evaluated by the members of the student's DAC as follows:

1. Committee members will grade the paper within two working weeks. The grades are:
 - a. Pass
 - b. Pass pending minor revisions
 - c. Pass pending major revisions
 - d. Fail
3. The majority of committee members must give passing grades if the paper is to pass.
4. Revised papers will be graded Pass or Fail by those faculty members requiring revisions. Revised papers will be graded within, at most, two working weeks depending on the magnitude of the revisions.
5. If the paper fails, the student will have an opportunity to make satisfactory revisions. A second failure is tantamount to dismissal from the doctoral program.

It is expected that this paper will be completed by the end of the student's third year of graduate training, after he/she has successfully defended his/her Master's thesis.

Oral Preliminary Comprehensive Exam

The oral preliminary comprehensive examination will be scheduled for the academic semester following successful completion of the written preliminary comprehensive examination. At the student's option, the format of the oral preliminary exam can follow either of two formats:

1. Broad examination of the student's knowledge of life-span developmental psychology. In this case, each doctoral advisory committee member will submit to the major professor, in writing, a question to be posed to the candidate. The major professor will set the order in which these questions will be asked. The student will be given a few minutes to read over the question, make notes about his/her answer, and then orally answer the question. After each DAC member has asked a question, other questions may follow.
2. As an alternative, the student may elect to present a research-based colloquium on a topic approved by the advisory committee. The format will follow presentation procedures at national societies, but the student will be allowed 20 to 30 minutes for the formal presentation. An open question session will follow.

Annual Evaluations

Satisfactory progress toward an advanced degree involves more than satisfactory performance in coursework. It also includes continuous, active involvement in research, meeting deadlines, professional responsibilities and obligations, and other program requirements. In Spring semester each year, the program faculty meet to review each student's progress. This formal review is in addition to any periodic conferences students may have with their major professors. In general, students will be evaluated on the progress they have made since the last evaluation. In the case of first-year students, the review will consider progress since enrolling. Each student will receive written feedback regarding his/her evaluation. It should be noted that these evaluations are useful not only to the student for gauging his/her progress but also are considered by the faculty in making recommendations for awards and assistantships for the next academic year. Evaluation criteria include:

- Timely completion of program requirements (e.g., thesis, prelim exams)
- Continuous involvement in research
- Course grades (NOTE: It is expected that you will get good grades in graduate school -- in fact, a 3.0 GPA is required by the Graduate School. It is your research expertise, and sometimes your skills in the classroom and in communicating, that will play the critical role in your success. You need to get good grades to stay in the program and receive support, but this is not sufficient evidence of satisfactory progress.)
- Evidence of generativity, such as:
 - a. Taking the initiative to read the literature pertaining to your research endeavors
 - b. Interacting with fellow graduate students and professors about your work
 - c. Synthesizing and interpreting your work in novel ways
 - d. Asking "what can I do to advance knowledge?"
- Productivity (which takes on increasing importance as graduate education progresses):
 - a. Completed research projects
 - b. Conference presentations
 - c. Preparation and submission of manuscripts for publication
 - d. Applications for research support
 - e. Publications