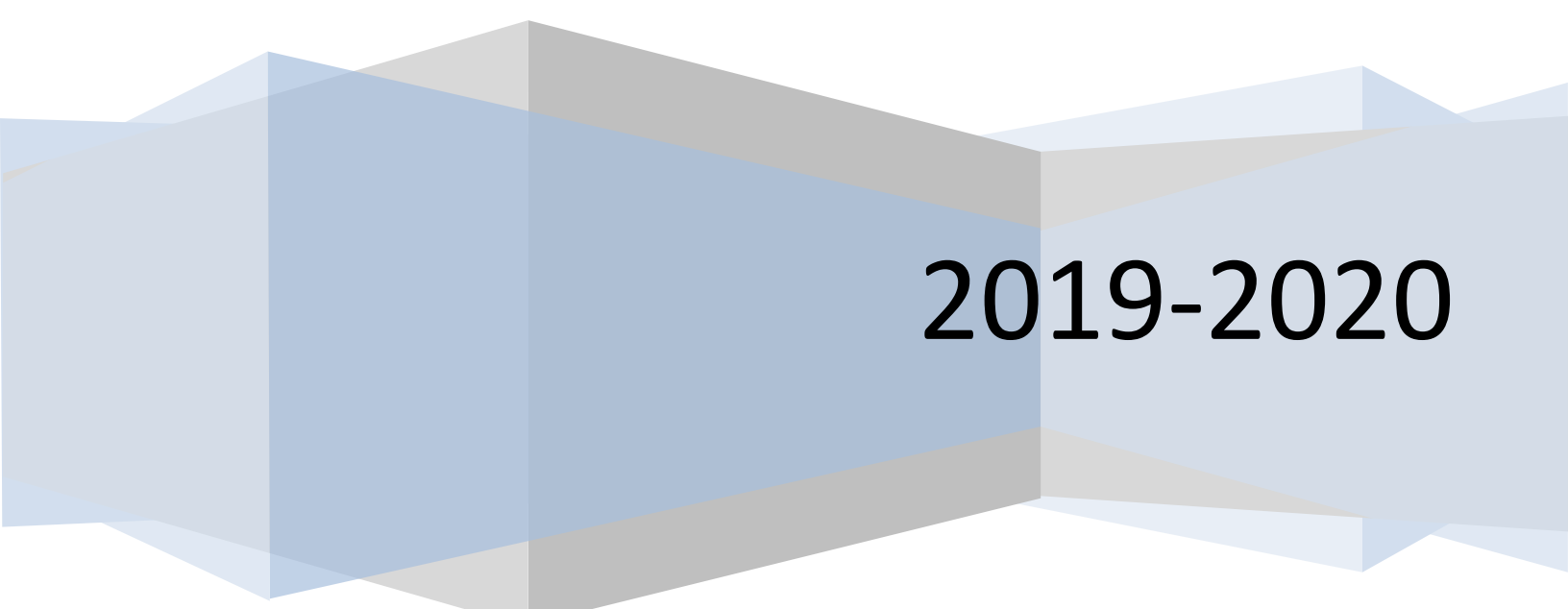


University of Michigan

# DEVELOPMENTAL AREA

STUDENT HANDBOOK



2019-2020

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# **DEVELOPMENTAL AREA STUDENT HANDBOOK**

## **Introduction**

Welcome to the Graduate Program in Developmental Psychology at the University of Michigan. In the first weeks as a new graduate student it is easy to feel overwhelmed by the flood of information, consulting and advice. This handbook is a concise compilation of the basic structure of the Developmental program and provides helpful guidelines for planning your studies over the course of the five-year program. The handbook does not replace seeking advice from your advisor, other faculty members, and advanced graduate students.

Beyond the first semester as a new student, you should continue to consult this handbook when questions arise about rules, requirements and procedures in the program.

The handbook sections follow the sequence of years in the program, beginning with general information then moving to the first two years of the program and candidacy requirements, and ending with the three post-candidacy years. The appendices provide details about the Prelim Exam and requirements for students in joint programs.

## **General Information for Incoming Students**

As a graduate student, you are simultaneously a member of four units:

1. the University of Michigan,
2. the Rackham School of Graduate Studies (often just called Rackham),
3. the Department of Psychology, and
4. the Developmental Psychology Area

University policies, Psychology Department policies, and Developmental Psychology area procedures help to assure high standards and steady progress of graduate training. There are, as well, a vast array of opportunities available at Michigan to be taken advantage of and, inevitably, some pitfalls to be avoided. Most of the time, the Developmental area policies take precedence. You were specifically admitted to graduate school as a member of this area, and your training will be supervised and evaluated within the area. The area is responsible for the structure of the graduate program and can make changes when deemed necessary as long as requirements of the Department and of Rackham are met.

## 1. Goals of Graduate Study

Although students seek the Ph.D. for many different reasons, the doctoral program in Developmental Psychology is based on three components:

- a. training in the fundamental theories, methods, and research findings of developmental psychology;
- b. training in the design, conduct, and ethics of research; and
- c. teaching experience in academic settings.

Many career paths may result from this training – traditional careers in research and college teaching, as well as careers in government agencies, hospitals, schools, private industry, etc. In all cases, a unique component of the Ph.D.'s expertise is that of understanding and executing various forms of research. Thus, training in research expertise is the central component of graduate study in our program and is reflected in the time students are expected to spend on research related activities, including critical discussion of relevant theories, methods, and findings in the literature and the conduct, analysis of and communication of empirical research. We value the presentation of findings at conferences and – most important – the development of skills associated with writing and publishing research articles for peer-reviewed journals.

## 2. Basic Structure of the Program

The graduate program is divided into two phases: pre-candidacy and candidacy. Pre-candidacy comprises the first two years of study. During this period, students become familiar with major developmental theories and research and acquire the depth of knowledge considered necessary for high-level, independent developmental research. After reaching candidacy, although students focus primarily on their dissertation, they are also encouraged to work on other projects within their areas of interest. A student formally has reached candidacy when she or he has taken the required courses, passed the preliminary examination ("prelim" for short) and has turned in a satisfactorily report of the 619 research project, as detailed below. Usually students reach candidacy at the end of their second year in the program.

## 3. Financial Assistance

Students typically receive a 5-year package of financial support from the department. Details of that package are sent to you in the letter offering you admission.

The University and Rackham have various fellowship opportunities for students. We encourage Developmental students to apply for and obtain these fellowships whenever possible. Students should also consider applying for individual awards such as National Science Foundation (NSF) fellowships, American Association of University Women fellowships, American Psychological Association (APA) minority

fellowships, Institute for Social Research (ISR) Dissertation Awards, etc. Your primary Advisor (see below) can provide information about these types of support.

#### **4. Advising, Feedback and Evaluation**

Incoming students are assigned a primary advisor (also called the "A" advisor) on the basis of a likely match between the student's interest and those of the faculty member. This advisor helps students plan their studies and should be the first person you go to for advice about academic or program-related personal issues. During the first semester, each student should arrange a second advisor (the "B" advisor) and is free to change his or her primary advisor. The primary advisor must be a core developmental faculty member.

A primary function of the A advisor is to advise the student in the choice of courses that meet candidacy requirements and to guide work on a 619 research project (undertaken with the advisor or another faculty member). In addition, a strength of the program at Michigan is the variety of opportunities at other research institutes and laboratories on campus. Advisors can provide an initial orientation to this array of important resources. The two first year Proseminars and Area Brown Bag meetings will do this as well.

#### **5. Good Academic Standing**

Rackham, the Psychology Department, and the Developmental Area require that students are in good academic standing. In May each year, the Developmental Faculty meet to discuss the status of all students in our area. We consider reports about progress in coursework, research, and formal and informal teaching and decide if the student:

- is making satisfactory progress toward the completion of degree requirements and is within the time limits of the degree program, including approved extensions
- is demonstrating an ability to succeed in the degree program; and
- has a cumulative grade point average of 5.00 (B) or better.

Students are asked to submit a Student Progress Report (SPR) and vita together with other material (e.g., reflective statement in Yr.1, personal statement in Yr 2: refer to the Prelim section below for details about these papers). Feedback is provided to students by their research mentors and the Area Chair. Additional information about this evaluation process and the criteria for good academic standing is included in the Psychology Department Graduate Program Handbook of Policies and Procedures on the Department website and in the Rackham Graduate School Academic Policies guide, especially sections 4 and 5:  
[http://www.rackham.umich.edu/policies/academic\\_policies/](http://www.rackham.umich.edu/policies/academic_policies/)].

## Achieving Candidacy: Goals for the First and Second Year

Apart from finishing a dissertation, the attainment of a Ph.D. degree indicates that the student has achieved familiarity with a broad range of substantive areas within developmental psychology and related fields. Acquiring the basis of this competence is the major purpose of the first two years, often referred to as "pre-candidacy." The state of candidacy is reached on satisfactory completion of:

- a) an independent research study report (the "619"),
- b) a minimum of 36 credit hours in required courses
- c) a reflective statement (Yr 1) and Personal statement (Yr2), and
- d) the prelim examination with at least Pass Grades.

Almost all Developmental students reach candidacy at the end of the second year. Table 1 outlines suggested scenarios for Years 1 and 2 to ensure reaching candidacy within this time period. The text below describes these scenarios.

**Table 1: Suggested Scenarios for the First and Second Year**

YEAR	COURSES	619 AND RESEARCH	GSI	DEADLINES
1	Prosem I & II Stats 613 & 614 2 Core Developmental Courses 1 additional course (core, cognate, or breadth Psych 605 Ethics Seminar (1 Cr.)	Begin 619 research with A advisor  Approx. 10 hrs per week research project activities		Arrange B Advisor  SPR  Reflective statement May 1 <sup>st</sup>
2	Prosem III & IV  At least 2 courses (core, cognate, breadth)	Continue and complete 619  Approx. 10 hrs per week research project activities	Minimum = one semester	SPR  Personal statement April 1 <sup>st</sup>  Draft prelim questions  Prelim exam  619 draft and final report

## 1. Specific Goals for the First Year

First year students usually take 6-8 courses, 3 or 4 in each of two semesters. As outlined in Table 1, these courses typically include:

- a) The Developmental Area Proseminar (required in both semesters of the first year), Psych 759. (Note that two additional semesters of the Developmental Area Proseminar are required in the second year).
- b) Two semesters of statistics, usually the sequence Psych 613 and Psych 614.
- c) Two core courses in Developmental Psychology to assure early introduction to developmental courses, and to provide background for later advanced seminars. Section 3 below includes a list of developmental core courses and offers selection guidelines
- d) One additional course (totaling at least 4 credits: core, cognate or breadth)
- e) The Psych 605 Department Ethics Seminar (1 credit).

The area Proseminar and the Statistics sequence are graduate level introductions to developmental psychology, the area, and advanced statistics. They provide a broad overview of issues, theories and methods used in empirical psychological research.

In addition to courses, students begin to engage in research activities (approximately 10 hours/week) and commence work on their 619 research project (taken for credit) with their advisor or a relevant faculty member. In the first year, students should at least choose the research topic of their 619, begin writing their literature review and method sections, and typically in the summer commence a study or begin to work on secondary analyses of data available within a project (see section 2 below).

Finally, toward the end of the first year, students are required to submit a short Reflective/Integrative paper as an initial component of the "Prelims" for candidacy. The content of this paper is described in more detail in the Prelim Paper section below. The first year Reflective/Integrative paper should be 4 to 6 double-spaced pages and it is due by *May 1<sup>st</sup> of the first year*. This paper should be delivered to the given student's A and B advisors. After they have had a chance to read the paper (typically no more than one month), it is suggested that the three individuals have a meeting focused on the first year experience overall. The A advisor will notify the Developmental Area Chairperson (and secretaries) when this requirement has been met.

## 2. Goals for the Research Project (the "619") in the First and Second Years

Research competence is central to the attainment of the Ph.D. degree. This is reflected in the fact that completion of an original piece of research, the dissertation, is an essential requirement for the award of a Ph.D. Prior to dissertation work, students should also engage in a range of research experiences. Among these,

students must work on and complete an independent project advised by developmental faculty. This is called "the 619".

Each student should begin work with their primary (A) 619 advisor by the end of the Yr 1 fall term and inform the area chair of his or her selection of an advisor. Typically, the 619 is a project within a larger research program of a faculty member. The 619 report is not expected to be at the level of originality as the dissertation nor is it necessary that it will be accepted for publication. However, writing the 619 in APA format is required and will serve students well when they write up research for publication. A preliminary draft of the project report must be submitted to the primary (A) advisor and a second reader (the B advisor) by the end of January of the student's second year. Students are expected to have produced a final, satisfactory report no later than summer of the second year.

Although the 619 often implies conducting original research, it is perfectly appropriate to conduct a study that is a replication of previous work, a secondary analysis of data, or a portion of a larger study initiated by the faculty advisor if the student participates as a "second author" collaborator. Collaboration with other students is also permitted, if each student writes up his/her own aspect of the research.

The faculty recognizes that some projects and methods are more time consuming than others. Large projects that cannot be finished within two years are suitable for 619. In such cases, the student still must produce a satisfactory project report on time. Such a report might address analyses on a subsample of the data, results from a pilot study or the first wave of data collection. It is the obligation of the A and B advisors to inform the student of what will be sufficient evidence of research effort and experience in such cases.

### **3. Course Requirements for Candidacy by the end of Year 2**

Aside from the 619 - which formally is a course taken for credit - the overall course requirements for reaching candidacy consist of 12 courses to be taken in the first and second years. To reach candidacy, students must be enrolled full time for 4 terms. To maintain full-time status, pre-candidates must register for a minimum of 9 credits for non-GSIs. The minimum number of credits for full time status for a GSI is 6 credits. The following account integrates the course demands of the Rackham School of Graduate Studies, the Department of Psychology and the Developmental area.

Students must have completed the following coursework:

- a) Four Developmental Area Proseminars: Psych 759, one each semester during the first two years (8 credits total; 2 credits per semester). The Proseminar in the first year provides a broad overview of issues, theories, and research in developmental psychology. The Proseminar in the second year centers around two sets of activities: (a) attending the Developmental Area Brown



Bag series and reading/discussing papers on the topics covered in the series (1st semester) and (b) Prelim preparation (2<sup>nd</sup> semester).

- b) Two courses in statistics, typically the sequence Psych 613 and Psych 614 with a grade of B or higher for both courses. Students who receive less than a B for 613 and/or 614 should work with their advisors to arrange additional courses and ensure the necessary mastery of statistics for the program. Note that for Psych 613 and Psych 614, the Developmental Area requires a higher grade (B) than outlined in the Psychology Department Handbook (B-).
- c) At least 2 developmental core courses from the list below (NOTE: A third core developmental course is required for completion of the 5-year program but this can be taken after candidacy)
- d) One graduate course in another area within Psychology but outside the area of specialization (Breadth course).
- e) Two graduate courses (precisely: 4 credits total) outside Psychology (Cognate courses)
- f) Psych 605 Department Ethics Seminar

The **three current Core Course Groups** in the Developmental area are:

#### **Cognitive Development**

- PSYCH 751 Cognitive Development
- PSYCH 756 The Development of Language and Communication Skills

#### **Social and Emotional Development**

- PSYCH 757 Social Development
- PSYCH 793 Emotional Development

#### **Cross-Cutting Topics in Developmental Science**

- *PSYCH 758 Developmental Neuroscience of Human Behavior*
- PSYCH 796 Development in Infancy
- PSYCH 797 Development in Adolescence
- PSYCH 798 The Psychology of Aging

Over the 5-year program, students are required to complete **three** core developmental courses. In order to get a sound understanding of human development, one course will be completed from each of the three topical groups (i.e., 1 Social/Emotional development, 1 Cognitive development, 1 Cross-cutting topic). At least two core courses are required for candidacy. The third core course is a requirement for the 5-year program and can be taken after candidacy. The preliminary examination (see below) also emphasizes all aspects.

**Note:** Not all Developmental Core Courses are offered on a regular basis (in particular 756, 758, 793, 796, 797, and 798). It is suggested that students contact the relevant faculty and Area Chair to obtain information about the likelihood particular courses will be offered during their five years in the graduate program. In addition, students have access to a Google Sheet that lists graduate courses that area faculty expect to teach over the next three years. The title of the sheet is "Provisional Developmental Grad Course Projections." Please note, however, that plans for when courses are offered may change.

Any standard set of requirements can fail to meet the needs of certain students. As far as possible, the area tries to entertain students' requests and proposals, if well justified, in terms of training goals and achievements.

#### **4. Preliminary Examination Papers ("Prelims"): Years 1 and 2**

Students will write three integrative papers on conceptual and methodological issues in developmental psychology. The first paper is a personal review of progress in the program. This is submitted in two parts: namely as a Year 1 reflective statement and a Year 2 personal statement. The second and third papers are scholarly responses to specific exam questions.

##### **a. Personal Statement Papers: Years 1 and 2**

The Personal Statement component of the Prelim Exam consists of two papers: the first year "Reflective/Integrative paper" and the second year "Professional Statement" paper. Both of these papers provide opportunities for students to review and reflect on their scholarly development. The reviews should help students gain a better understanding about their own strengths and weaknesses and their own directions for the future. Students are encouraged to share drafts of these papers with their advisors as part of the mentoring experience.

The first year Reflective/Integrative paper is an opportunity for students to reflect on their professional progress, development, and insights over the course of their first year, and to provide thoughts about their professional future. This should be a reflective paper focusing on intellectual discoveries, progress, and issues that the student finds particularly attractive. This paper will serve as the basis for the second year paper.

The second year Professional Statement paper is an opportunity to examine your scholarly and professional activities in terms of both the broader field of developmental psychology as well as your own anticipated career trajectories. By building on the first year paper, it should convey the student's interests, ideas, and deepening understanding of core issues in developmental psychology. It should integrate the student's recent experiences with courses and research and point to future directions for personal career development. How and why, in a professional sense, are your scholarly activities important? What are the anticipated future directions? It would be useful to think of this paper as an early draft of the document you would submit as part of an academic or other professional job

application, as well as for promotion and tenure. Typically, these documents provide a broad rationale for the given individual's research program/professional activities, in theoretical terms and/or in societal problem terms, describe a stream of activities that would address the theoretical issues or societal problems, and place your program and activities within that stream. Clearly, there is no expectation that you would have all these issues worked out after two years of graduate school, but getting a start on this can be beneficial for the student, and can provide another avenue for faculty input on graduate students' career development.

These papers serve as annual narrative reviews of the student's professional experiences, aspirations, and knowledge gained from class and research project readings and discussions, and interactions with professors, mentors, and colleagues. The paper should reflect the student's integration of intellectual interests, progress in thinking about relevant developmental theory and research, and professional skills, and should at least include the following:

- (a) a background statement about why the student's work is important (e.g., the theoretical or practical problems being addressed);
- (b) a discussion of how the student's work connects with the field of developmental psychology in terms of classic and contemporary issues; and
- (c) a summary of how the work fits into the student's anticipated future career, focusing on how previous and current work and experience relate to future professional endeavors.

#### Timeline and Procedures

The first year Reflective/Integrative paper, which should be 4 to 6 double-spaced pages, is due by *May 1<sup>st</sup> of the first year*. This paper should be delivered to the given student's A and B advisors. After they have had a chance to read the paper (typically no more than one month), it is suggested that the three individuals have a meeting focused on the first year experience overall. The A advisor will notify the Developmental Area Chairperson (and secretaries) when this requirement has been met.

The second year Professional Statement paper is due by *April 1<sup>st</sup> of the second year*. (Failure to meet the deadline for this paper means the student will answer one additional question during the take home exam period. The additional exam question will be similar in difficulty and in length of the answer to the other two questions and completed in the same week.) This paper should be 8 to 10 double-space pages. This paper should be delivered electronically to three faculty members – the A advisor, the B advisor, and another faculty member (and an electronic copy should also be forwarded to the developmental area secretaries). The student and their primary advisor (advisor A) will work together to locate an appropriate third person. It is likely that the third faculty member (along with advisor B) would be a possible recruit for the student's dissertation committee. This three member prelim committee would meet with the student before the fall of the student's third year to discuss the paper, the student's academic experiences more generally over the first

two years, and the student's future professional plans. The A advisor will notify the Developmental Area Chairperson (and the secretaries) when this requirement has been met. The Professional Statement will become part of the student's file, and will be discussed among the faculty during the fall post-prelim evaluation of the third year students.

### **b. Scholarly Response Prelim Papers**

The second and third papers for the prelim are written responses to a take-home exam during a one business week period (i.e., Monday morning through Friday afternoon) in May after the second year. Appendix A "Student Guidelines for the Developmental Psychology Prelim Exam" gives more details about procedures and content. The date of the exam will be established in advance (normally by February) so students can plan accordingly. Previous exam questions are available to students from their first year in the program together with a suggested prelim reading list. The 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the Developmental Area Proseminar is explicitly devoted to preparation for the Developmental Psychology Prelim Exam. This preparation will be achieved through regularly scheduled meetings of peer study groups, faculty guidance and support, and a number of other strategies.

Content of Exam Questions: Students will be given copies of exam questions from previous years. Each winter term the second year students will be asked to write sample questions for the prelim exam based on the core issues and previous exam questions. Normally, each student will be expected to submit two draft questions, and while it is acceptable to collaborate on this exercise, each student must submit separate unique questions. *Student draft exam questions are due by May 1<sup>st</sup> (to Area Chair).* Faculty may choose or revise these questions or they may write new questions to generate 4-5 questions for the prelim take-home exam. Students will choose two of these questions to answer without discussion or collaboration with others during the week-long exam period.

Format: Each paper will present succinct, organized, and coherent essays and arguments in 10-15 double spaced pages. All papers should be submitted electronically to the developmental area secretaries who will log the entry dates and later distribute papers to faculty.

Evaluation: The area faculty will use a grading scheme or rubric for evaluating the papers so students know in advance what dimensions of their work will be evaluated and so all students and faculty have the same guidelines. The chair of the prelim committee will assign two readers to each paper who will grade the papers independently from one another. Further, each faculty reader will be blind to the identity of the student during the grading process. Faculty evaluations are due to the Area Chair within one month of receiving the papers. Each reader will provide a grade of High Pass, Pass, Low Pass, or Fail, as well as written feedback (either a signed review or as comments on the paper itself). The Prelim Committee will aggregate the responses and notify the Area Chair of the final grades; the Area Chair will identify and work to resolve any large inconsistencies among grades (e.g., an answer that received one "high pass" and one "fail"), and notify the faculty and students of the results.

Any question that is graded Fail by at least one reader will be returned to the student, who will be expected to revise and resubmit the answer in consultation with the faculty member(s) who gave a failing grade. The due date for this revision is August 15 (unless there is grounds for an alternative arrangement (e.g., medical or family emergency) and approved by the Area Chair). The revision should take into account the concerns and suggestions of the grader(s) who failed the question. The original grader(s) will read the revised answer and determine whether the revision merits a passing grade or the student has failed to produce a satisfactory paper.

If the student passes all questions following revising/resubmitting (with all grades of Low Pass, Pass, or High Pass), the student will have passed Prelims.

Answers that receive failing grades after revision will be considered failed questions. Failure to meet the revision deadline communicated to the student by the Area Chair will also be considered a failing grade.

Typically students who go on to revise an original failed answer do pass prelims. The procedures below clarify our procedures in the rare event that this does not occur.

If a student fails one or more questions following a revision, this would constitute grounds for dismissal from the program. At this point, the student would be counseled by the Area Chair and their advisor and given the option to leave the program. Alternatively, they can appeal the grade by submitting a formal appeal to the Area Chair. If appealed, the Area Chair will then form a three-member faculty committee (all three not the original graders) who will read the revised prelim question independently and determine a PASS/FAIL grade with 2 out of 3 vote determining the final outcome. If the vote results in a FAIL, then this recommendation will be brought to the entire faculty at a faculty meeting for a final vote of dismissal, with a majority vote determining the outcome. In this case, every effort will be made to contact all area faculty and allow them to vote in absentia. If the final vote is a recommendation of dismissal, this would then be communicated to the department, along with a report detailing the reasons for the recommendation and the process by which the decision was made. The SAA office will then follow the due process indicated in the department dismissal policy.

### Faculty and Peer Support

Faculty are encouraged to increase their mentoring of students for the reflective/integrative paper at the end of the first and second years. Increased mentoring for the 619 is also encouraged so students achieve candidacy on time. If they desire, second year students can form ad hoc peer study groups for prelims in addition to those organized as part of the second-year Developmental Area Proseminar.

## **1. Course Requirements in the Developmental Program after Reaching Candidacy**

After achieving candidacy, students are expected to focus on their dissertation in the third, fourth and fifth years. Requirements, therefore, are minimal. The Developmental area requires the students to complete the following in years three to five:

1. The Current Issues/Professional Development Seminar (Psych 858)
2. A third Core developmental course, if it was not already taken in the first or second years
3. One advanced seminar (Psych 958), if it was not already taken in the first or second years
4. Department Ethics seminar (Psych 805) in the 4th Year
5. Teaching requirements
6. Dissertation proposal
7. Dissertation
8. Final Oral Exam

The Current Issue Seminar is offered every two years. At least one advanced seminar is offered each year. It is a good idea to plan the course enrollment to best fit with the time demands for the dissertation. For those collecting their own data for their dissertation, the data collection phase is usually the most time-consuming part in empirical research.

Note: This list represents the minimal requirements in the program. We expect that students will be engaged in activities beyond this minimum. For example, students often take additional courses in statistics beyond the required two prior to candidacy; students should engage in multiple research projects beyond just the 619 and the dissertation; internships and placements outside of research/laboratories (in schools, clinics, governmental or private institutions) are important training opportunities for many students, as are workshops, conference presentations, etc.

## **2. Developing Professional Skills (Teaching and Research Internships)**

Teaching and teaching assistance in courses in the department is a required part of graduate training at Michigan. Typically, these encompass paid teaching assistantships (GSI or TA) that are part of the 5-year departmental funding package. Developmental students, however, have a diversity of career goals. For students who plan careers as college professors, multiple teaching experiences are a must. For those who have specific research, service, or consulting careers in mind, teaching experience is also helpful but other "internship" experiences are important as well.

Internships can significantly advance the understanding of developmental psychology when the students work and train in a setting related to their interests (e.g., school setting, hospital or state institution, a congressional office, an agency or a research center associated with child or adult development). Internships can be formal (paid official internship program/position) or less formal (ad hoc, or one-of-a-kind arrangements for work and training). Faculty members can assist students in finding placements for these internships. Internships are most effective when planned in detail by the student with approval in advance by the student's advisors and the person supervising the internship. Students write a report of the internship activities which they submit to their advisors.

## **The Dissertation**

The culmination of research training for the Ph.D. is the doctoral dissertation. This dissertation takes the form of original empirical research designed, conducted, analyzed, and written by the Candidate. In order to support the student's progress in deriving a research question and developing an adequate study design, the two initial steps are to assemble a dissertation committee and to write a dissertation proposal which must be discussed with and approved by the dissertation committee.

### **1. Dissertation Committee**

During the third or fourth years, the Candidate assembles his/her dissertation committee. This committee guides students through the dissertation process, reviews their progress and eventually accepts the completed dissertation after the final examination (defense). At least one of the four (or more) committee members must be from the core Developmental area faculty and usually more are. At least one committee member must be from a department other than Psychology.

### **2. Dissertation Proposal**

Typically during the third year, candidates work on the proposal describing their intended dissertation research. During this phase, it is a good idea to seek advice and comments from the first and second advisor, the dissertation committee members, as well as faculty members who are familiar with the chosen field of interest. The proposal enables the student to benefit from the suggestions of faculty members and insures acceptance of the design of the study by the committee, before beginning the dissertation research.

Dissertation proposals consist of two parts:

1. A conceptual analysis of the dissertation area: This section is a review of the type published in *Child Development*, *Developmental Review*, *Perspectives in Psychological Science*, or other relevant top-level journals dealing with developmental issues. Since it is not meant to be an exhaustive review, this section usually contains 15-30 pages of text. Through the selection and

evaluation of research literature, the student reveals an understanding of a body of work, highlights major issues, and provides a framework which leads to an outline of the central hypotheses underlying the dissertation research.

2. Research proposal: The research proposal provides a detailed account of the proposed dissertation research itself including the research design (experiment or field study, definition of population etc.), subjects and specific procedures, as well as preliminary overview of potential data analyses. Results of pilot work are also pertinent, and are often included in the proposal.

Examples of dissertation proposals are available in the Developmental google drive, student resources. A dissertation proposal meeting of the dissertation committee is scheduled as soon as the proposal seems mature enough to evaluate and approve. At the meeting, the candidate's proposal is discussed and modifications are suggested or required. The proposal process ends when the candidate and his/her committee agree upon a promising and acceptable dissertation project. At that point a proposal acceptance form is completed and submitted to the Department.

### **3. The Final Dissertation**

Since all developmental graduate students are expected to carry out research throughout their graduate school career, the dissertation should be the culmination of research efforts that have been ongoing for some years. Indeed, under the University's multiple manuscript option, your dissertation research might include three separate research manuscripts, one reporting an earlier research project and the others designed more specifically as your "final" dissertation research.

There are no formal area outlines as to appropriate dissertation topics or methods. These matters are agreed upon by the candidate and the dissertation committee in the proposal phase of dissertation work. Experimental laboratory research, survey research, naturalistic observations, etc., are all appropriate. Dissertation data can be collected by the candidate individually, or as part of a larger research team, or even involve analyses of already collected data from some appropriate large-scale database. In all cases, however, the questions, analyses, and write up must reflect the student's original thinking and efforts.

A typical dissertation should approximate in focus and structure an article (or series of articles) in one of the major journals in the field, (e.g., *Child Development*, *Developmental Psychology*, *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *Psychology and Aging*, *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*). In the case of experimental research, it would probably include the results of a series of related experiments. In most cases, dissertations have a more extended literature review and discussion section than the typical journal article and the data analyses are typically more thoroughly documented. Some sense of the scope of dissertations may be obtained by looking at earlier dissertations completed in our department. Dissertations are available in the departmental library.



#### **4. Final Oral Examination (the "Dissertation Defense")**

Typically, candidates meet with their committee or individual committee members as the dissertation research is being conducted to present and discuss data, analyses, interpretations, etc. A final meeting of the committee must take place following the completion of the dissertation where it is formally accepted after an examination. The dissertation, unbound, must be registered with the Graduate School and given to the committee in advance of the final examination.

Each committee member then gives a written evaluation of the work to Rackham. If these evaluations are acceptable, the final examination is scheduled.

The final examination must be scheduled in advance with the Graduate School and must take place, at minimum, a specified number of days before the anticipated graduation date (specific dates are set each semester by Rackham).

The candidate typically begins with a brief presentation of the research questions and results of the dissertation (e.g., a 10 to 15 minute presentation) followed by a discussion of questions the committee members might have after having read the completed dissertation. The candidate is expected to "defend" his or her scientific work academically, i.e., weighing arguments carefully and reacting to criticism in appropriate ways. Final acceptance of the dissertation is often made contingent on revisions before the final copy of the dissertation is submitted to Rackham.

## Appendices

Appendix A: Student Guidelines for the Developmental Psychology Prelim Exam  
Appendix B: Requirements for Students in Combined Programs or Joint Degrees

### Appendix A: Student Guidelines for the Developmental Psychology Prelim Exam

#### Overview

The preliminary examination questions require you to organize your own thoughts about specific topics. We are looking for creative, integrative, and thorough responses that draw upon all you have learned about the topic in your various courses as well as from the reading list and from personal experiences. This is your opportunity to demonstrate how you think about integrative issues in developmental psychology. The prelim reading list provides a common core of materials that are sufficient to answer the questions. But we expect that you will draw upon additional sources in framing your response to each question.

A good prelim answer should demonstrate your understanding of relevant research and theory, but you should go beyond this knowledge base to make a point or argue for a position. Cite research findings but do not just list or summarize others' arguments or findings; instead create, integrate and propose. Be sure to consider all parts of the question in your answer. Moreover, your answer is an essay; like any essay, it should interest the reader. Say why the question, as you are addressing it, and your answer, as you are presenting it, are important, intriguing, or fundamental in a way that engages the reader. To do these things best, be prepared to put yourself – your interests, ideas, and reflections – into your thinking and into your writing. Argue for, persuade us about, commit to, invest in some key issues, fundamental ideas, evaluations of and/or proposals for research. To reiterate, the questions are meant to be vehicles for you to think creatively – in the thoughtful, data-constrained, scientific sense of that term – and to do so integratively. Use the questions as opportunities to engage with these issues at that level of scholarship.

#### Core Issues And Content Areas

The exam is designed as an opportunity for you to demonstrate that you have a good understanding of several **core issues** in the field of developmental psychology. These core issues concern the nature, determinants, and context of development, the interface between theory and research, and the strengths and weaknesses of various research designs and methods. They include (but are not limited to) the following:

1. Definitions and markers of developmental change (e.g., quantitative versus qualitative change, directionality of development)

2. Mechanisms of transition from one point in development to another
3. Development as a function of general versus domain-specific processes
4. Continuity versus discontinuity in development
5. Nature versus nurture as sources of influence on development
6. Specific models of human development (e.g., transactional/dynamic model, ecological model, life-span perspective, etc.)
7. Universality versus cultural relativity, and the role of context on development
8. Interplay between theory and empirical research findings
9. Research designs (e.g., strengths and weaknesses of cross-sectional and longitudinal research designs)
10. Strengths, weaknesses, and applicability of descriptive (e.g., correlational) and explanatory (e.g., experimental) research methods
11. Interplay between basic and applied research

These core issues apply to and cut across many or all content areas of development. By **content areas** we mean subjects such as (but not limited to) language, social relations throughout childhood and adulthood (peers, parent-child, teacher-pupil, etc.), knowledge or concepts, memory or information processes, socioemotional functioning, psychopathology, and academic competencies (reading, mathematics, science, etc.). In preparing for the exam, think about each of these core issues/topics in relation to multiple domains of behavior and the range of substantive matters at issue. This will assist you in formulating practice questions particularly pertinent in addressing the respective core issue.

To guide you in this process, below we provide examples of germane questions raised by four of the core issues (note that each of the examples below touches upon several of the core issues):

#### Core Issues #1: Definitions and markers of developmental change

How we think about and analyze change over time is the heart of developmental psychology. At the same time, the conceptualization and analysis of developmental change is perhaps the most challenging part of our science. Development involves change over time, but so do a variety of other psychological phenomena, e.g., maturation, learning, habituation, sensitization. What kinds of change over time would qualify as developmental? How would one's definition of development be affected by (a) different theoretical perspectives and (b) such issues as nature vs. nurture, age and cohort, continuity vs. discontinuity, organizational vs. behavioral change, differentiation vs. integration, and the idea of development as progress vs. the idea of development as being multidirectional including decline?

#### Core Issue #2: Mechanisms of transition

How children, adolescents, or adults move from one point in development to another is a question for any developmental theory. What kinds of constructs have been proposed as mechanisms of transition from one point, level, or stage of development to another (e.g., scaffolding, bootstrapping, cognitive conflict,

constraints, changes in social demands), and what kinds of theories have utilized the constructs? How do such constructs differ with regard to the following: (a) their characterization of change, (b) their applicability across topics or domains, (c) their ability to account for individual differences vs. common trajectories, and (d) their overall strengths and weaknesses as explanations of development?

#### Core Issue #5: Nature versus nurture as sources of influence on development

Different theories have stressed the importance of the influence of environmental, genetic, and maturational influences on human development. Focusing on two content areas of development, consider the following questions: (a) Which theories have stressed one as more important than the other two and what evidence has been amassed to support that priority? (b) Drawing on empirical studies, are there different periods in development, or different domains of development, where each influence seems more prominent? (c) How do the three influences interact over the life span?

#### Core Issue #7: Universal versus cultural relativity

A common charge made against contemporary developmental psychology is that it depends too heavily on Western, middle-class data, concepts, and theories. As a result, developmental psychologists have been criticized for being insensitive to cultural and subcultural influences on themselves and on the people they study. Such charges are serious, for they imply that contemporary developmental psychology represents a biased approach to developmental processes, and has not positioned itself so that it could reveal both universals and cultural differences in human development. Evaluate the validity of this charge in relation to two content areas of development.

#### Examination Guidelines

The Area Chair, along with faculty member(s) of the prelim committee, will meet with you during the winter term of your second year to discuss the prelim procedures and guidelines (see also companion document, "Developmental Prelim Exam Procedures")

##### 1. Time and Place of Exam

The prelim examination is typically held during May (after students' second year), and will take place from Monday of that week (starting at 9 a.m.) through Friday of that week (ending by 5 p.m.). By 5 pm of the given Friday, your answers will be due to the designated developmental secretary electronically either by email or by disk/cd. It is your responsibility to make sure that the secretary receives your answers on time. Late exams will not be accepted.

A member of the Prelim Committee will confer with you before scheduling the exam to try to avoid time conflicts. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to resolve time conflicts so that you are present for the exam on the selected dates.

The place of the exam is your choice, but it is strongly recommended that you remain in town. It is essential that you work on the exam completely alone and do not confer with other students, colleagues, or professors during the exam week.

## 2. Nature and Format of Exam

The exam will consist of 4 to 6 questions that concern some or all of the 11 core issues identified above (You will not be asked the questions presented above; these are examples only and may be broader than the questions you will be asked on the prelim exam). You will be asked to answer 2 of the questions.

It is expected that you will write 10 to 15 doubled-spaced pages on each of the 2 questions. Answers should be submitted electronically.

You are responsible for budgeting your time so that you can complete the exam.

In preparing your answers, you are permitted to use notes along with books, articles, etc. (unpublished materials are generally not appropriate citations; papers accepted for publication – those in press – are fine).

In addition to demonstrating creativity and a well-argued position, it is crucial that you demonstrate depth of knowledge in the areas you cover. You should be prepared to discuss the relevant research literature knowledgeably and with specific examples.

To ensure breadth of answers, an individual question may ask you to answer with regard to two or more content areas.

It is essential that you show understanding of both language/cognitive development and social/emotional development across your two exam answers. In addition, across your two answers, you typically will be required to refer to two or more of the following broad content areas: language, cognitive development, social/emotional development, or psychopathology.

The prelim questions will be complex, often with several parts each, so it is important that you read them through carefully. For the questions you select to answer, be certain you answer all parts of the questions. Failure to answer any part of a question may lead to a failing grade on that question.

The prelim reading list includes readings typically sufficient to consider all of the topics/issues and typically sufficient to answer all of the questions. But you should not feel constrained to mention only readings on that list. You are also encouraged to utilize other readings from your courses and knowledge of developmental psychology more broadly.

## Evaluation

Each of the exam questions will be graded by at least two developmental faculty members. Examination answers are graded pass/fail. A student who receives 3 or 4 passes (from the 2 graders of each of the student's 2 questions) passes the exam. To convey more differentiated feedback, for each pass answer, the grader will indicate if it is "low pass", "pass", or "high pass."

Student identity will be kept anonymous until after exams are graded. The identity of the faculty who graded each question will be revealed to the students after grading is completed.

### Failing grade(s) on one of two papers

For a given student, if one of the papers receives one (or two) failing grades, the paper must be revised. In such cases, the normal process is as follows:

After carefully reading the faculty comments, the student should make contact with both graders and try to set up a common meeting. This will not always be possible given that this process takes place in the early summer when many faculty members are off campus. At the very least, in person or telephone (preferred) or email (acceptable) contact should be made between the faculty graders and the student to try to get as clear a sense as possible the concerns about the paper.

Once this contact/meeting has taken place, the student will have three full weeks to revise the paper (unless an alternative arrangement is made by the Area Chair). The revision should be submitted to the Area Chair and/or Prelim Committee Chair.

The Area Chair/Prelim Committee Chair will distribute the revised paper to the two original graders (and may ask additional faculty to get involved in grading the revision), and request an expedited review (due within two weeks).

### Failing Grade on a Revised Paper

In the unlikely event that a given student receives a failing grade on a revised paper, the developmental faculty as a group will need to decide between terminating the student from the program or permitting remedial actions. Remedial actions might involve another revision of the paper(s) and/or answering new question(s). If remedial action is to be taken, it would typically take place during the fall.

## Appendix B: Requirements for Students in Combined Programs or Joint Degrees

A substantial minority of students combine Ph.D. training in Developmental Psychology with other programs or degrees. Developmental science and expertise is increasingly multi-disciplinary so we encourage students to pursue masters programs or certification programs in other units (e.g. statistics, public policy, women's studies) when these domains are especially relevant to their interests and goals. There are also several interdisciplinary programs for students to consider as part of their larger training, e.g. LIFE: Evolutionary and ontogenetic dynamics over the life course [<http://www.sitemaker.umich.edu/LIFE/home>]; the Program in Culture and Cognition; and the Neurosciences Program.

Some students are admitted into formal programs for joint Ph.D.'s, for example the Joint Program in Social Work and Social Science (Psychology). Such students must apply to be formally affiliated with Developmental Psychology and must satisfy most (though not all) of the requirements outlined in this Handbook. The exception is that Joint Program Social Work students are required to take 2 (rather than 3) core courses in Developmental Psychology, the Professional Development Seminar (Psych 858) is recommended (rather than required), and students need not take an Advanced Seminar (Psych 958) in the area. **We strongly recommend that students in this joint program read the Social Work Guidelines and Handbook for the combined program and consult regularly with their advisors in both the Developmental and Social Work faculties to ensure that the requirements are met in each program.** Ideally, several three-way meetings should occur prior to candidacy to avoid misunderstandings. This joint consultation is particularly important as you decide which developmental courses to take each semester.

It is also very important with regard to your decision about the 619 research project. There are two scenarios for this project. First, you can choose to complete a 619 within the Developmental program following the guidelines outlined earlier in this handbook. Successful completion of the 619 meets the Social Work Research requirement. The second scenario is that the Social Work Research Internship report can replace the 619 provided that it is read and approved by **both** your faculty advisor in the Developmental Area and your primary Social Work faculty advisor. If you decide for this second scenario, both advisors should be consulted early for advice about the topic and design of your research and about the form of the final written report to ensure agreement. Your advisors in both faculties evaluate the Social Work internship report.

Some students are accepted for independent dual degree programs (via procedures in Rackham and the Department), e.g., dual degrees in the Departments of Psychology and Anthropology. Students must apply for affiliation to the Developmental area (not just the Department) and must fulfill all or almost all requirements listed above. Any exception to the requirements must be agreed to in

writing, in advance, by the Area Chair in consultation with the students' advisors and the area faculty.