

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Office of the Vice-President Academic

MEMORANDUM

To: Senate

From: J.M. Munro, Chair
Senate Committee on
Academic Planning

Subject: Department of Psychology
Graduate Calendar changes

Date: March 19, 1992

Action undertaken by the Senate Committee on Academic Planning and the Senate Graduate Studies Committee, gives rise to the following motion:

Motion: "that Senate approve and recommend approval to the Board of Governors as set forth in S.92-25 the changes in the M.A. degree requirements in the Experimental Psychology Program.

J.M. Munro

2. **Change in MA Degree Requirements - Experimental Program**

a) Expectations regarding course scheduling

Current Calendar Entry - p. 269

"Students are expected to complete PSYC 910, 911, and the four subject courses in the first year of the program and PSYC 898 (MA Thesis) in the second year."

Proposed Calendar Entry

"In the first year of the program, students are expected to complete PSYC 910, 911, and at least two of the four subject courses, and to initiate work in PSYC 898 (MA Thesis). Remaining subject courses and PSYC 898 should be completed in the second year."

Rationale

We feel that graduate students should become active in research as soon as they enter the program. However, many students find that the first-year workload under current requirements effectively prevents them starting their MA research until the second year. Allowing coursework to be spread more evenly over the two year period will ameliorate the problem.

b) Course substitution

Proposed Calendar Addition

At the end of the penultimate paragraph in column 1, page 269, add:

"Students are permitted to substitute for one, and only one, of the required subject courses. The substitute course must be a) another approved graduate course offered by the Psychology Department, or b) an approved graduate course from another department or institution. Requests for substitution must be supported by the student's Senior Supervisor, and must be submitted in advance for approval to the departmental Graduate Program Committee."

Rationale

From time to time, it is appropriate for students to take a course additional to those required. The need to maintain an appropriate balance between coursework and research in the MA Program makes it reasonable to treat such a course as a substitute rather than an addition.

c) Change of Credit Hours

We recommend that the credit value of the all experimental subject course proseminars (700-level) and seminars (900-level) be increased from 3 to 5: PSYC 705, 715, 720, 725, 730, 740, 744, 750, 760, 770, 780, 785, 915, 920, 925, 930, 935, 940, 944, 950, 960, 965, 970, 980, 985.

Rationale

When the 700-level proseminars were established, the Department was undecided whether they should be valued at 3 or 5 credits. The amount of work involved pointed to 5, but we were reluctant to allow the total number of credits for the 6 courses required of students in the Experimental Psychology MA Program to be as high as 30. We chose to specify the credit as 3 hours, and scheduled the courses for 3 contact hours. The same concerns led to the 900-seminars being valued at 3 credits, even though these courses are usually scheduled for 5 hours (they are typically paired with 400-level undergraduate seminars that have 5 contact and credit hours). In the event, the amount of work required in these graduate courses clearly warrants 5 credits. If this recommendation is approved, all the above-listed courses will be scheduled for 5 hours. Although it will increase the number of contact hours, the move will be welcomed by students in the Experimental MA Program who have expressed the need for a greater opportunity for classroom discussion in their courses.

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6 hours of related courses deemed acceptable by the department may be counted towards the 24 hours of Psychology.

For further admission requirements, refer to the *Graduate General Regulations*, and the experimental and clinical programs described below.

Application as Special Student

Admission requirements for Special Students are outlined in the *Graduate General Regulations*. Application as a Special Student must be submitted to the Graduate Program Assistant in the department. Students seeking admission as a Special Student must obtain written permission from the instructor of each course they wish to take, and submit it, along with transcripts of previous university work, no later than ONE month prior to the semester in which they plan to undertake the proposed course of study. Special Students taking graduate courses in Psychology must obtain a minimum grade of B- in each course taken during a given semester in order to be admitted as a Special Student in subsequent semesters.

Supervisor

The department will appoint an initial faculty supervisor for each incoming student in his or her area of interest. Students must select a senior supervisor from the available faculty in the department by the end of their first semester.

Satisfactory Performance

The progress of each student will be assessed at least once a year by the department. A student must maintain a Grade Point Average of 3.0 (see *Graduate General Regulations*). In addition, a course grade of less than B is not considered satisfactory at the graduate level. Any student who obtains a grade of less than B in two or more courses may be required to withdraw from the program. MA students are expected to complete their MA thesis within two years of entrance to the MA program. PhD students are expected to complete their PhD thesis within four years of entrance to the PhD program.

Program in Experimental Psychology

The PhD program in experimental Psychology provides students with specialized training in the areas of biological, cognitive, developmental, and social psychology. However, other programs may be tailored to meet the specific interests of individual students.

Admission

All applicants are required to submit scores on the Graduate Record Examination (verbal, quantitative, analytical, advanced psychology sections), official transcripts, three letters of academic reference and a statement of purpose. Students admitted with a Bachelor's degree must complete the Master's program requirements (first two years) prior to admission to the PhD program. Students transferring from other graduate programs may petition the department for credit for equivalent courses.

*Degree Requirements

Students admitted to the experimental program with a Bachelor's degree are required to obtain satisfactory performance in PSYC 910 (Research Design I), PSYC 911 (Research Design II), and four subject courses, and to complete an MA thesis (PSYC 898). The subject courses are: PSYC 925 (Seminar in Cognitive Processes), PSYC 950 (Seminar in Developmental Psychology), PSYC 960 (Seminar in Social Psychology), PSYC 980 (Seminar in Biological Psychology). ~~Students are expected to complete PSYC 910, 911, and the four subject courses in the first year of the program and PSYC 898 (MA Thesis) in the second year.~~ In addition, students may elect or be required by their supervisor to take other courses, including the core courses (PSYC 600, 601, 602, and 603).

All subject courses, as well as all other courses numbered 915 or higher, will cover specific topics in depth within a general area, and may vary in content from year to year, reflecting the major issues in the different areas. For this reason, students may register for each course more than once. For example, PSYC 925 may appear three times on a transcript: once as PSYC 925 Cognitive Processes (Human Memory), again as PSYC 925 Cognitive Processes (Categorization Processes), and again as PSYC 925 Cognitive Processes (Problem Solving).

After successful completion of these courses and the MA thesis, students may then be admitted to the PhD program. PhD students are required to take two subject courses (in addition to those taken for the MA degree), and complete comprehensive examinations and a doctoral dissertation. Normally, the two subject courses will be in the student's area of specialization. Students admitted to the PhD program after having completed their MA at another

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university may be required to take additional courses, as specified by their Supervisory Committee.

Supervisory Committees

For the MA thesis, students must establish a Supervisory Committee before the end of their first semester in the program. The MA Supervisory Committee will consist of at least two faculty members from the Psychology Department, one of whom will be the Senior Supervisor and Chair of the Committee. Other faculty outside the department who are considered necessary by the student and Senior Supervisor may serve on the committee. The PhD Supervisory Committee should be established by the end of the first semester following admission to the PhD program. Students are required to choose a faculty member in the Psychology Department as the Senior Supervisor and Chair of the PhD Supervisory Committee and two or more additional members. At least two of the additional members must be members of the Psychology Department. ~~One of whom~~ must be able to act as advisor with respect to measurement and design aspects of the dissertation research.

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MA Thesis

The Master's thesis is expected to be a piece of research of high quality. Ordinarily the research will involve the collection and analysis of empirical data. However, on occasion, non-empirical research of special merit will be accepted. In such cases, the Graduate Studies Committee should be informed in writing of the intent.

All students are required to present a written thesis proposal to their Senior Supervisor before the end of their fourth semester in the program. After the thesis has been submitted, an oral defence will be scheduled. This defense will focus on the problems, methods, results of the research, and the relation of its finding to major trends and current theoretical problems in psychology. Students are expected to have completed their MA thesis by the end of their second year in the program. For further information and regulations, refer to the *Graduate General Regulations*.

PhD Comprehensive Examination

A committee consisting of the candidate's PhD Supervisory Committee and faculty members in areas related to the candidate's major interests will set a written PhD Comprehensive Examination appropriate to the candidate's particular program. The examination cannot be taken before successful completion of the course requirements and the MA thesis but must be taken within four years of admission to the PhD program. It may be retaken only once.

PhD Dissertation

Before starting dissertation research, the candidate will present a formal proposal for evaluation. The presentation will be made at a meeting open to all members of the Department of Psychology. The candidate is required to present a dissertation proposal before the end of the second year in the program, and is expected to complete the PhD dissertation within four years of entrance to the program. The completed dissertation will be defended in oral examination. Judgement will be made by an examining committee. For further information and regulations, refer to the *Graduate General Regulations*.