

Masters Degree Requirements

Program Requirements

Students are referred to the ETSU Graduate Catalog for academic requirements of the School of Graduate Studies (<http://www.etsu.edu/reg/catalog/graduate.aspx>) which, among other criteria, specifies that students must maintain at least a 3.00 average to remain in good academic standing. Specific departmental requirements also apply. All students in the MA/PhD program are expected to be enrolled as full-time students and to devote themselves full-time to their graduate pursuits during their enrollment in degree-related activities. Students are expected to be active in research collaboratively with members of the department faculty each semester they are enrolled. In addition to didactic coursework and research, clinical students are required participate in clinic and field experiences commensurate with their level of training and type of graduate assistantship and experimental students are required to teach undergraduate laboratories and courses. Teaching is a formal component of the experimental training program. See Appendix E for Benchmarks for Matriculation Process.

Master's Thesis

A requirement of the PhD program is the successful completion of a Master's Thesis project, both written and oral. The choosing of a Thesis Chair and Committee by the student is a very important process that should be based upon a careful consideration of the student's interests and the research expertise of the faculty members. After gaining some familiarity with the issues in the field and with the faculty members' areas of expertise, the student will be encouraged to begin development of a thesis topic, no later than 24 semester hours into the student's course of study, so that the thesis becomes the final step in an integrated learning experience. For Experimental PhD students, the thesis must be proposed by April 1st of the second year in the program unless extenuating circumstances prohibit proposal by this date. For Clinical PhD students, a student cannot begin practicum until they have proposed their thesis. Priority status for departmental funding for students may be based on meeting this deadline. The Thesis Committee will be composed of three members of the graduate faculty, one of whom may be from outside the Department of Psychology. The Committee chairperson must be a full-time member of the faculty of the Psychology Department and must hold appropriate graduate faculty status within the university.

Students entering the program who have already completed a master's thesis must have that thesis accepted by a three member faculty advisory committee selected by the DCT/DET. The student is responsible for submitting a copy of the thesis to the DCT/DET for dissemination. The thesis is to be submitted, reviewed, and either accepted or rejected during the student's first semester of study to allow adequate time for a new thesis project to be conducted if required. The student will complete the preliminary project prior to being admitted into the doctoral candidacy.

Students in Master's programs at ETSU are required to maintain continuous registration (each fall and spring semester) for Thesis until work is completed even after they have defended their proposal, and must be so registered for a summer session. If graduation is in August, the student must be registered for at least one credit hour during summer session.

Policies and Procedures for Master's Thesis

1. Thesis Committee chairpersons will be full-time psychology faculty with appropriate graduate faculty status.
2. The committee will be composed of at least three members of the graduate faculty, and at least two members will be from the Psychology Department.
3. Once a thesis committee has been formed, any change in committee membership should be discussed with all involved parties; the graduate school committee form must be amended if changes are made. It is the student's responsibility to see that the formal changes are made.
4. Students must file a graduate school committee form with the DCT/DET. Schedule a meeting with your thesis Chair before scheduling your defense. Before a proposal meeting or a defense, make sure that your chair has seen and made comments on one or several drafts and agrees that it is time for a meeting. Arrange a time, making sure that your committee has at least 2 weeks to carefully read your paper before the meeting. Fill out the appropriate forms below and give them to the executive aide to be delivered to the graduate school.

Thesis Committee Record Form;
Admission to Candidacy Form (Clinical to file after capstone is complete);
Application for Graduation (Clinical to file after capstone is complete)

5. Faculty reserve the right to decline to serve on Thesis Committees. If a student has difficulty finding faculty to serve or must replace a committee member, the DCT/DET will provide assistance.

6. It is up to you to bring your own equipment for your proposal and defense and make sure that it works. Consider doing a trial run before the day of your defense.
7. Thesis defenses are expected to be:
 - a. Announced (time & place) to Psychology faculty and graduate students two weeks ahead of time. Notify the DCT/DET and post a notice on the psychology bulletin board, the graduate lounge, and on the “Psychtalk” listserv. Make a copy of thesis abstract available for review;
 - b. Open to all members of the university community;
 - c. Judged according to a reasonable standard of rigor;
 - d. Evaluated on a pass/fail vote by the Thesis Committee members;
 - e. Restricted to a maximum of two attempts with the second failure resulting in termination from the program.
8. After a successful defense, the student should remind faculty of any grade changes (SP to S), get all forms signed and submitted to the appropriate executive aide. It is the student’s responsibility to bring to the thesis defense the following forms to avoid delays in securing signatures:
 - a. *Report of Comprehensive Examination and Thesis Defense* – All committee members must sign the form. Dates for passing the Thesis Defense must be shown. See Appendix C for relevant Graduate School Forms;
 - b. Manuscript approval and electronic submission forms
9. Anticipate required revisions of the document. Once the document is finalized students are required to send an electronic copy of the thesis to the Thesis Chair in compliance with the Graduate School Policy.
10. Specific guidelines on the layout, electronic submission, and deadlines for presenting the final copies of the thesis to the Graduate School are available in the Graduate School. Basic Requirements for Electronic Submission of Theses and Dissertations (March 2016) are available from the graduate school and on their web site (<http://www.etsu.edu/gradstud/etd/default.aspx>). The graduate school conducts brief, no-cost workshops on thesis manuscript preparation, forms and deadlines each semester. These are very useful and students are encouraged to attend. The graduate school holds an **optional** Thesis and Dissertation Boot Camp for a fee of \$150.

The Thesis: Practical Considerations

1. Accepted projects may include meta-analyses, analysis of archival data, organizational interventions, and experimental laboratory work, but must be empirical in nature, not a theoretical or literature review paper.

2. Clear communication of expectations about roles, scope, and content, is important. Students, chairs, and committee members need to define expectations thoroughly, clarifying timelines and availability both of faculty and student.
3. Approval of the proposal is an implicit contract. The faculty agrees that if the student diligently and professionally completes the work in the proposal and performs satisfactorily and reaches satisfactory conclusions, that they will consider the project to be an adequate thesis. The student is agreeing to carry out the work as proposed. Except in extreme circumstances which must be approved by the Chair, both parties agree that there should be no major changes after approval of the proposal.
4. Faculty may not be available during the summer months. There is no formal expectation that faculty will remain involved in thesis work at times when they are not under contract.
5. Decided by a departmental vote, students are discouraged from bringing food for their committee to their proposal and defense meetings.

Clinical Capstone Project

Purpose

The Clinical Capstone Project is used to: a) assess the student's clinical and ethical competencies; and, b) assess the student's ability to integrate and synthesize core knowledge in the field. The Clinical Capstone Project may be considered the capstone or finalization of the Master's degree.

Timing of Clinical Capstone Project

In order to sit for the Clinical Capstone Project, the student must have the written approval of his/her Thesis Committee Chair; this is obtained via completion of the *Request to Sit for Clinical Project Form*. Approval will be granted only after the student has successfully completed 36 hours of the Master's curriculum and successfully defended his/her Thesis; however, approval of the Clinical Capstone Project, committee, and designation of a clinical supervisor may only be sought concurrently with thesis development and prior to the thesis defense unless there are extenuating circumstances. The Clinical Capstone Project Chair may consult with other faculty members in evaluating the candidate's readiness. Ordinarily, a student making adequate progress would not be expected to complete the Clinical Capstone Project until the spring or summer of the second year in the program. Students entering the program with a Master's degree in-hand, and whose Master's thesis has been accepted by the clinical faculty, should submit a request to begin the Clinical Capstone Project to the Chair of his/her Thesis Committee at his/her earliest opportunity. As a "rule of thumb," soon after the Thesis proposal the student and the Clinical Capstone Project Chair should decide on a clinical case and committee for the Clinical Capstone Project. When appropriate, the Clinical Capstone Project Chair may act as a consultant, and may defer selection of a clinical case and/or supervision of the case conceptualization to a clinical supervisor.

Formation of Clinical Capstone Project Committees

The Clinical Capstone Project Committee is composed of three faculty members, all of whom must be full-time, tenured or tenure-track clinical faculty members holding at least temporary ETSU Graduate Faculty status. A fourth Committee member may be added for consultation or as a clinical supervisor, if necessary, and may be from the Department of

Psychology, or another school/college in the University, and should also be a full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty member with an earned doctorate in a health service field, or a health professional or service provider with a terminal degree in their field, and at least temporary membership in the graduate faculty. The Clinical Capstone Project Chair should be indicated. Once the Clinical Capstone Project process has begun, changes to the composition of committees are discouraged except under extraordinary circumstances. There may be instances in which a student, a faculty member or the Clinical Committee, either solely or by mutual agreement, decides that a change to a students' Clinical Capstone Project committee is necessary (e.g., a consultant needs to be added; a faculty member should be recused or removed; or, a student or faculty member decide that they are no longer able to work together professionally). Any such instances will be brought to the attention of the Clinical Committee and must be approved in writing by the student, Clinical Capstone Project Chair and the DCT.

Clinical Capstone Project Guidelines

The Clinical Capstone Project will be in the form of a written clinical case presentation, followed by an oral defense of the case presentation. Both elements of the case presentation will require: 1) the integration of case/client background and history; 2) symptoms and presenting problems; 3) diagnostics and assessment; 4) theoretical framework, which includes at least two alternate theoretical conceptualizations; 5) treatment considerations, including evidence based approaches; 6) treatment considerations, including short, mid-range, and long-term goals; 7) individual and cultural differences; 8) ethical issues and, 9) outcome information and assessment. The clinical student will need to evidence at least basic curriculum-based competencies in these areas. The written component of the Clinical Capstone Project should not exceed 20 pages in length exclusive of the title page, abstract, references or appendices.

A formal proposal meeting is not required for the Clinical Capstone Project. The appropriate clinical case to be analyzed will be selected by the student in collaboration with his/her Clinical Capstone Project Committee Chair with assistance from a clinical supervisor, as appropriate. In some instances, this may be an existing therapy case, or text or journal-based case, an ongoing practicum or clerkship case, a group-level case, a hypothetical case, or a video vignette depending on the clinical experiences or particular needs of the student.

Oral Defense of Clinical Capstone Project

The student, upon completion of the written clinical Capstone Project case will be required to orally defend their work. The purposes of the Oral Defense are: 1) to extend the evaluation of the student's knowledge and understanding of clinical subject matter covered in the written Clinical Capstone project (emphasis may be placed on topics in which the student's responses are judged to be weak); 2) to evaluate the student's knowledge and understanding of related clinical subject matter not included in the written Clinical Capstone Project; and, 3) to evaluate the student's ability to respond, in a scholarly and professional manner, to a variety of verbal inquiries.

Passing/Failing Clinical Capstone Project

A majority of the Committee members must deem the student's performance to be acceptable, and to have demonstrated at least minimal competence, on each part of the Exam for the student to pass. A student who fails any part of the Clinical Capstone Project will be required to retake each failed component. The portions of the exam to be retaken may be done so no later than one calendar year after the original exam. Failure of any component of the Clinical Capstone Project a second time will result in dismissal from the program. At the first round of the Clinical Capstone Project, the Committee will determine whether a student has obtained a full pass, conditional pass, or failure.

The Clinical Capstone Project will be considered fully passed if all three Committee members assign the student a passing evaluation of both the written and oral components.

A Conditional Pass may be granted, and occurs when at least two Committee members have assigned Full Passes, with the third assigning a Conditional Pass or Fail. If the student obtains a Conditional Pass in any first-round component, Committee members will communicate in writing, the nature of the remedial measures required to the student, the Clinical Capstone Project Committee Chair, and the DCT. The remedial measures then must be completed to the satisfaction of the majority of the Committee for Conditional Pass to be revised to Full Pass status.

A component will be considered failed if at least two Committee members have assigned a FAIL, regardless of whether a third committee member has assigned a Full Pass, Conditional Pass or Failure. Failure of either the written or oral component of the Clinical Capstone Project

may be grounds for dismissal from the Clinical Program. In the event that a student is assigned a FAIL by two faculty members, or in the instance of a serious failure (e.g., failure by all committee members; severely deficient and/or unethical work) on any first round component, the Committee will convene to consider whether the student will be allowed to retake the Examination.

In cases where the Committee is in agreement that academic or clinical remediation will improve the Clinical Capstone Project performance and/or products, a single opportunity for remediation may be granted. The Director of Clinical Training will notify the student, in writing, of the decision and the remedial measures required, if any. The second round Clinical Capstone Project (if administered) will be graded as either PASSED or FAILED. A failure on either component during the second round will result in the student's dismissal from the Ph.D. program in Clinical Psychology.

Students will be provided with the final outcome of the pass/fail voting of the committee as a whole. That is, individual committee member votes will remain confidential. Documentation including committee signature and scoring forms, and the Clinical Capstone Project written product will be maintained in the student's permanent record.