

Graduate Student Handbook

M.A. Program in Psychology
Psychological Science Track



Psychology Department

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **COLORADO SPRINGS**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the M.A. Psychology Program—Psychological Science Track at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS). This handbook is designed to provide information about program requirements, policies, and procedures. This handbook supplements the information available on the websites of the Psychology Department (<https://psychology.uccs.edu>), Graduate School (<https://graduateschool.uccs.edu>), and Student Code of Conduct (<https://dos.uccs.edu/student-conduct>). You should carefully read the information on these websites to be fully informed of all important requirements. You are responsible for informing yourself of all relevant requirements and procedures. The staff of the Psychology Department will email you the electronic version of this handbook document near the start of the academic year to request your signature. You will be required to provide an electronic signature (last page of this document) acknowledging that you have received, read, and agree to the policies and procedures detailed in this handbook. An in-person orientation session near the start of the academic year will be conducted for all entering psychology graduate students to answer questions you might have about the program and this handbook. Contact the Program Director if you have additional questions while enrolled in the program.

- A. UCCS Graduate School Mission:** The mission of the UCCS Graduate School is to promote excellence in graduate education and to facilitate and enhance educational experiences and opportunities for graduate students. The Graduate School has the responsibility for oversight and coordination of graduate programs (including the graduate programs in psychology) and ensures compliance with Graduate School policies. It is decentralized, with the main contacts residing within the Psychology Department and listed below.

Name	E-mail	Work Phone
Lori James (Department Chair)	ljames@uccs.edu	(719) 255-4172
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- B. Philosophy of the Psychological Science Track:** The psychological science track of the Master of Arts in Psychology provides students with a solid foundation in psychological research. The program was primarily designed to prepare students for doctoral degrees in psychology or related fields, although many of our students decide to pursue careers immediately after graduating without subsequently enrolling in a Ph.D. program. The program includes coursework in research methodology and

design, statistics, and core content areas. Students will also develop a research focus that will serve as a basis for coursework and the Master's thesis. Focus areas include but are not limited to cognition, development, social psychology, health psychology, biopsychology, personality psychology, evolutionary psychology, trauma psychology, geropsychology, scale development and validation, and psychometrics. Students may elect to pursue an optional sub-plan in a particular content area. Currently, the following sub-plans are available: Biopsychology, Cognition, Developmental Psychology, Geropsychology, Social Psychology, and Trauma Psychology.

II. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Coursework Overview

The program of study has three major components:

- (a) coursework in research design, statistics, and the scientific method
- (b) coursework in the knowledge base of psychology
- (c) Master's research thesis

Work with your research mentor to develop a curriculum course plan that best meets your individual graduate training needs. Students are also strongly encouraged to meet with Andrea Williams regarding their course schedules before or when starting the program. Students on a two-year plan can follow the curriculum plan laid out in this handbook and check in with Andrea if needed. Not all courses are offered every semester, so you are advised to consult with Andrea to ensure your course plan takes into consideration the timing of course offerings. Students on a three-year plan must meet with Andrea to plan their curriculum. It is possible you may not be able to enroll in your preferred core content and elective courses based on your graduation timeline and maximum enrollment limits of a course.

B. Detailed Course Requirements

1. M.A. Psychological Science students must take the following required courses:

- PSY 5810 Research Statistics and Methodology I (4 credits)
- PSY 5820 Research Statistics and Methodology II (4 credits)
- PSY 5830 Applied Multivariate Techniques I (3 credits)
- PSY 6030 Research Practicum (3 credits)
- PSY 7000 Master's Thesis (6 credits; credits are completed in 1 semester or across more than 1 semester)
- PSY 6430 Contemporary Issues in Psychology (1 credit each; completed in 4 different semesters for a total of 4 credits)

2. M.A. Psychological Science students must take at least two of the following core content courses (3 credits each):

- PSY 6100 Developmental Psychology
- PSY 6110 Cognition
- PSY 6120 Biopsychology
- PSY 6130 Social Psychology
- PSY 6140 Personality

3. Two additional courses are required. They may be taken from the Core Content Courses listed above and/or from the following elective courses (3 credits each):

- PSY 5210 Biopsychosocial Aspects of Aging
- PSY 6160 Biopsychosocial Aspects of Trauma
- PSY 5840 Methods and Design for Analyzing Change
- PSY 6480 Selected Topics in Psychology PSY 6813 Advanced Research Design and Statistical Methods Seminar (Special Topics)

The M.A. Psychology Program in Psychological Science requires a minimum of 36 credits. Talk with your mentor to select the most appropriate courses and contact Andrea Williams to find out when those courses may be offered.

You must be enrolled during the semester in which you defend your Master's thesis. If you have already completed all coursework (including all 6 units of PSY 7000) before the semester you defend, you must enroll in 0 credits of PSY 9990 (Candidate for Degree) during the semester that you plan to defend. If you are enrolled in PSY 9990 but still unable to defend that semester, you would need to later re-enroll in 0 credits of PSY 9990 in the semester that you will actually defend. Tuition cost for PSY 9990 is 0.5 credits (but no psychology program fee is charged). The graduation deadlines for students who expect to graduate soon can be found through this link: <https://graduateschool.uccs.edu/current-student-resources/graduating-this-semester>. Missing completion and graduation deadlines could incur additional fees and require enrollment in a subsequent semester to complete the degree.

C. Seminar Courses

Most of the core content and elective courses are in seminar format. Seminar format courses require active student engagement and have the following general expectations.

Learning objectives:

- Describe major theories, principles, and findings in a topic area
- Read, understand, and critically evaluate published research in a topic area
- Engage in critical evaluation of scientific methods and analyses and draw appropriate inferences from findings
- Demonstrate critical thinking, writing, and oral communication skills

Required course elements:

- Read multiple scholarly sources (e.g., journal articles, book chapters, narrative reviews) weekly
- Complete regular thought/reflection assignments based on assigned readings
- Actively and regularly engage in class discussions
- Deliver a presentation
- Write a major paper (e.g., research proposal or term paper)

D. Master's Thesis

Master's students are required to establish a mentorship relationship with a faculty member, no later than the middle of the Fall semester of their first year in the program and to develop a Master's research thesis related to that faculty member's research interests. A thesis committee is comprised of the faculty mentor and two additional faculty members with Graduate School appointments. The thesis committee members ought to be mutually agreed upon by the faculty mentor and student. Students take 6 credits of PSY 7000 while working on the Master's thesis. Students are expected to successfully complete all courses in the program and defend their thesis no later than the end of their third year. Students who do not complete their coursework and thesis by this timeline may be judged as not making satisfactory academic progress in the year-end annual evaluation reports and placed on academic probation. General guidelines and tips for the thesis proposal are found in the Appendix of this handbook.

Be aware that the Graduate School mandates that your faculty mentor run your thesis manuscript through software (purchased for faculty by the university) that checks for plagiarism and AI-generated content and sign off that your manuscript is free of plagiarism and not written by AI. If substantive overlap exists between your thesis and other sources or if the thesis is not written by you, this could lead to serious repercussions and prevent you from receiving the degree.

E. Sample Course Sequence for Psychological Science Students

The Psychological Science track requires a minimum of 36 credits. The courses to satisfy degree requirements can be completed by a full-time student in 2 years if the course sequence listed below is followed.

YEAR 1

Fall:

PSY 5810 Research Statistics and Methodology I

PSY 6430 Contemporary Issues in Psychology

PSY 6xxx Core Content/Elective Course

Spring:

PSY 5820 Research Statistics and Methodology II

PSY 6430 Contemporary Issues in Psychology

PSY 6xxx Core Content/Elective Course

YEAR 2

Fall:

PSY 5830 Applied Multivariate Techniques I
 PSY 6430 Contemporary Issues in Psychology
 PSY 6xxx Core Content/Elective Course
 PSY 7000 Master's Thesis
 PSY 6030 Research Practicum

Spring:

PSY 6430 Contemporary Issues in Psychology
 PSY 6xxx Core Content Course/Elective Course
 PSY 7000 Master's Thesis

Note: PSY 6030 (Research Practicum) is taken in the fall or spring semester of Year 2, depending on your mentor's teaching load.

In consultation with one's faculty mentor, a student may instead elect to complete their degree over 2.5 or 3 years. If you pursue this route, notify Andrea as early as possible to help spread out your courses.

F. Transfer Credits

Transfer credits from other graduate institutions must be reviewed and approved by the Program Director. The accepted list of transfer credits and courses will be documented and placed in the student's file. Students will be asked to provide relevant course descriptions, syllabi, and assignments to help the Program Director determine equivalency of the courses. Usually, this process is completed after the student receives an offer of admission to the program but before the student officially enrolls in the program. A Transfer of Credit form must be completed and approved by the Graduate School before graduation.

III. STUDENT MENTORING, TERMINATION, AND GRIEVANCES

A. Mentoring

Each incoming student selects a faculty mentor based on mutual research interests while considering other factors such as mentoring style, availability, etc. Review the faculty websites of the psychology department and journal publications of a potential faculty mentor to help make an informed decision. Send an email to a potential mentor to schedule a meeting to discuss whether you are a good fit for their research lab. Incoming students are encouraged to secure a mentor as soon as possible, preferably upon receiving an offer of admission and before classes begin, as some

faculty will no longer take on new students once their labs are full. Students have until the October 15th deadline of their first semester in the program to successfully secure a mentor. After a faculty member has agreed to mentor you, please email the Program Director and cc your mentor, so that this mentor-mentee relationship is documented in the graduate student directory. An offer of admission to the program does not guarantee you a mentor, as it is entirely each student's responsibility to secure a mentor.

The topic of your Master's thesis project is expected to be in one of your faculty mentor's areas of research expertise. Faculty mentors typically will not advise students on thesis and research projects outside their research specialties. Your mentor will be a highly important person for you, one who we hope will provide you with great research experiences, advise you throughout the program, and help you to some extent throughout your career. Thus, selecting a mentor is a very important task and a decision that should be made with thoughtfulness. It is very important to ask a potential mentor to lay out their expectations for students in their lab so that you can determine whether their expectations and work style match yours. It is important to determine if you "fit" well with your mentor and to select someone with whom you feel confident you can develop a positive working relationship. You might consider requesting that you and your mentor create a mentoring plan that lays out the expectations for both the mentor and mentee (e.g., how often you will meet, expected benchmarks for research progress, etc.). Another way to get information about a potential mentor is to speak to current student lab members to ask about their lab experiences and perspectives.

You are encouraged to discuss teaching or research assistantships with your research mentor to consider how such additional responsibilities may impact your research productivity. In consultation with a faculty mentor, students are encouraged to present their research at scientific research conferences and to write up the research for publication.

Most students maintain the same mentor throughout their time in the program. However, in some cases, your research interests might change or you might discover that your work style is not compatible with that of your mentor. If desiring to change mentor, you should discuss this with the present mentor in a timely manner and before the change to the new mentor is made. If considering a change in mentor, it is understood that you may wish to consult peers, other faculty, and/or the Program Director of the Psychological Science program, but you should not proceed to work with a new mentor before notifying your present mentor and making an official change with the Program Director. If you have already taken the PSY 6030 (Research Practicum) course with the original mentor, you must take this course again with the new mentor. If you are unable to secure a mentor or your mentor drops you from their research lab, the Program Director will email you a remediation letter with a specified deadline to secure a new mentor, which must be satisfied to avoid being dismissed from the program. It is impossible to work on the thesis without a

mentor.

B. Grades, Quality of Graduate Work, and Time Limit to Complete the Program

Article V, Section B of the Graduate School Policies and Procedures Manual (<https://graduateschool.uccs.edu/current-students/policies-and-procedures>) describes the minimum requirements for grades and quality of graduate coursework. In addition, the Psychology Department has set the following standards and policies regarding grades:

All courses to satisfy the program curriculum must be completed with a letter grade, so taking a course based on a pass/fail grading system is not permitted. To graduate, a student must earn grades of “B-” or higher for all course requirements in the program. Any grade below B- is considered non-passing.

Your research mentor will be assigning you a letter grade for Psy 6030 (Research Practicum) and PSY 7000 (Master’s Thesis). For 7000 credits, you will receive an “IP” (in progress) during each semester that you enroll in that course, which will later be changed to a letter grade by your faculty mentor upon successful defense of the thesis.

The temporary grade of “I” (incomplete) may be possible when an instructor believes that course work is unavoidably incomplete or that a supplementary examination is justifiable. The decision to offer an “I” is under the discretion of the instructor. Upon completion of an incomplete, the change of grade process is conducted electronically by the instructor of the course and approved by the Dean’s Office of the College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences.

The temporary grade of “I” will automatically convert to “F” if the work is not completed within the one-year maximum period of time according to university policy. A 'I' will be assigned to a course only when all the following conditions are met:

- a. The student requests an incomplete grade
- b. Reasons for not completing course requirements are beyond the student's control
- c. A substantial amount of coursework has been completed at a passing level by the student
- d. The instructor sets the conditions whereby the course will be completed, including a deadline within one year.

Failure to remove the “I” by the deadline will result in the student being placed on probation.

Grades of “C” or Below: A grade of “C+” or lower in any course taken by a graduate

student is unsatisfactory (a B- or higher is satisfactory). A total of two grades of “C+” or lower results in the student being placed on academic probation. If a third grade of “C+” or lower is received, the student will be dismissed from the program. A student who receives a grade of C+ or lower in a course can repeat the same course only once. Thus, if receiving a nonpassing grade twice for the same course, the student will be dismissed from the program. A student remains on probation until the Psychological Science Faculty Committee is satisfied that appropriate remediation has occurred. Courses with a grade of C+ or lower do not count toward graduation, so such a grade in any course in the student’s plan of study must be remediated. Appropriate remediation procedures are as follows:

The Program Director and the course instructor define remediation requirements, which usually involve retaking the course and possibly other requirements. The student must agree to the remediation, including the timeline for completion. The remediation plan becomes a part of the student’s plan of study and is considered in assessing progress through the program.

Students who entered the program in Fall 2026 or after have up to five academic years after their start date to complete all program requirements for the M.A. degree before being dismissed from the program. Leave of absences do not extend this time limit. However, students who entered the program in Fall 2025 or before, have up to six academic years after their start date to complete all program requirements for the M.A. degree before being dismissed from the program. Leave of absences do not extend this time limit.

C. Graduate Student Activity Report and Annual Evaluation Letter

Near the end of the spring semester of every academic year, the Program Director will email you a web link to the “Graduate Student Activity Report,” a questionnaire that asks you to report on your academic and scholarly activities during the past 12 months. The questionnaire will request information such as progress on your Master’s thesis, T.A. positions and other relevant jobs held, contributions and work conducted in your research mentor’s lab, presentations at scientific conferences, research conferences attended, publications of journal articles and book chapters, professional development, service to the department or university, etc. Comprehensively complete the questionnaire and provide detailed responses to demonstrate that you have been engaged in academic and scholarly activities. You may be evaluated as making unsatisfactory progress in the program if this questionnaire is not completed and submitted in a timely manner.

Afterward, the Psychological Science Faculty Committee will meet to discuss your responses to the Graduate Student Activity Report, feedback from faculty regarding your performance and conduct in classes, contributions to your research mentor’s lab, progress on the Master’s thesis, professionalism, strengths, and weaknesses. Based on all these sources, constructive feedback about your performance will be described in a

written annual evaluation letter on department letterhead. Additionally, this evaluation letter will provide an overall rating of whether you have been making “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” progress in the program. This letter will be emailed to you during the summer. Your signature is mandatory to show that you have read and understand the evaluation letter. Your signature does not indicate that you endorse or agree with the content of the letter. You may be evaluated as making unsatisfactory progress for not providing your signature. Only students who have not graduated and will be returning the following academic year will receive this evaluation letter.

D. Student Termination

If the Psychological Science Faculty Committee determines that a student’s performance in one or more areas is deficient, they may elect either to dismiss the student from the program or to place the student on probation. If the deficiency is judged to be sufficiently severe, the student may be immediately dismissed from the program. If the performance deficiency is judged to be remediable, a remediation plan will be developed with the student to address performance deficiencies. This remediation plan will describe the nature of the student’s problems, the expected behavior patterns or goals of the plan, possible methods for accomplishing these goals, and a date for re-evaluating the student. The student will be placed on academic probation during this remedial period. The success of the remediation plan will be evaluated by the Psychological Science Faculty Committee by the specified date. On the basis of this evaluation the Committee may: (a) decide that the specific problem is no longer a significant one and continue the student in the program; (b) develop a further remedial plan and date for reevaluation and continue the student on probation; or (c) if the student has failed to meet the remedial goals and there is no expectation s/he will be able to meet them in the immediate future, s/he may be formally dismissed from the program.

The student has the right to appeal any decision made by the Psychological Science Faculty Committee. The intent to appeal must be provided in writing to the Program Director of the Psychological Science program within 7 days of being notified of a decision by the Psychological Science Faculty Committee. An appeal will first go to the Program Director. If the Program Director is not impartial, the next level of appeal will go to the Department Chair, and then to the Dean of LAS. These policies are further described below under Grievances.

E. Grievance and Appeal Procedures

A student who has a grievance or appeal, such as unfair treatment or unethical behavior by one or more faculty members, should first make efforts to resolve the conflict informally. The grievant should:

- Discuss concerns directly with the parties involved.
- Consult with the Program Director about the incident for suggestions about how to

proceed. If the Program Director is not impartial, the student may address the concern with the faculty mentor, any other faculty member, or the Department Chair.

- After the Department Chair, the next level of appeal is to the Dean of the College of Letters, Arts, & Sciences.

The Graduate School at UCCS also has a procedure for student appeals. The Graduate School will generally not hear appeals unless the student has exhausted procedures in the department and the college. Information on the Graduate School process for appeals can be found here: <https://graduateschool.uccs.edu/current-students/policies-and-procedures#6.2>.

UCCS also has an ombuds program available to students to assist in problem resolution. An ombuds is a person who works outside the formal problem resolution and grievance procedures of the University. The role of an ombuds is to listen, receive, and provide information from parties, provide informal facilitation between parties when requested, and such other functions normally seen as within the purview of a university ombudsperson. An ombuds does not make, change, or set aside policy or previous administrative decisions, nor does an ombuds serve to determine the rights of others to unilaterally resolve conflicts. Information on this program can be found here: <https://ombuds.uccs.edu>.

F. Leave of Absence

The following is taken from UCCS Graduate School policy for taking a leave of absence (e.g., personal reasons, medical excuses).

If a student needs to take a leave of absence (LOA) from a program for longer than one semester, the student will need to request a formal leave of absence from the program. A leave of absence may occur for one year (3 continuous semesters including summer). Students may request consecutive leaves but if the student has not contacted the program to return from their LOA at the end of the designated timeframe and later request to return, the student may need to reapply to the program to determine if they are still eligible to return to the program.

A program may also place a student on administrative leave of absence if a student is not making satisfactory academic progress in the program. An administrative leave of absence cannot be used in place of academic probation but may be used simultaneously. The program may request that students meet certain conditions prior to returning. Such conditions for returning to the program must be written in a formal document, agreed upon by the student and Program Director, and filed with the Graduate School.

At readmission from a student-requested LOA or an administrative LOA, a program may ask students to complete any new program requirements from the original application. During the leave period, the progression clock remains active. That is, students will need to complete a master's degree within six years or a doctoral degree within nine years from the original admission into the program. The student and program may still request an extension within the limits of the graduate school and program rules.

Once a leave of absence has been approved by the program, the Program Director should notify the Graduate School. The Graduate School will work with the appropriate campus offices to put a stop on enrollment and financial aid for that student, until the time they decide to come back. To remove the holds, the program will need to inform the Graduate School that the student has restarted the program.

G. Deferrals in Matriculation

Requests for delaying matriculation in the program will not be granted under any circumstances. Those who were admitted or agreed to matriculate, but decide not to enroll in their first semester in the program, will not be granted a deferral to enroll in a later semester or academic year. These candidates ought to reapply and submit a new application package for the future year when they are ready to attend. Additionally, they should consider sending an email to the Program Director, who will then inform the admissions committee that these applicants were previously accepted into the program, but admission is in no way guaranteed with the new application. Students who agree to matriculate but do not enroll in courses during their first semester will be dismissed from the program.

IV. SEXUAL HARASSMENT, STUDENT REPRESENTATION AND ORGANIZATIONS, AND OTHER POLICIES

A. Sexual Harassment Policy

UCCS is committed to fostering a collegial academic community whose mission requires positive learning, working, and living environment that values and protects individual dignity and the integrity of human relationships. As a place of work and study, UCCS must be free of inappropriate and disrespectful conduct and communication of a sexual nature, of sexual harassment and related retaliation and of all forms of sexual intimidation and exploitation. UCCS will not condone sexual harassment or related retaliation of or by any member of the university community. Individuals who violate the University Sexual Harassment Policy will be disciplined or subjected to corrective action, up to and including termination or expulsion.

Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual attention. It can involve intimidation, threats, coercion or promises. Harassment may occur between any combination of members of the campus community: student, faculty member, staff member and administrator. It generally occurs when one person, the harasser, holds a position of real or perceived authority over the other individual.

The Office of Institutional Equity receives reports of possible sexual harassment. When it is determined that there may be a violation of the Sexual Harassment Policy, an investigation of the allegation may be conducted. (The Office of Institutional Equity will brief the complainant and respondent on the steps of any investigation and report.) If you think you are being sexually harassed, the Office of Institutional Equity can be reached through <https://equity.uccs.edu>.

B. Student Representation

Students may have the opportunity to serve on various faculty-based committees in the department. This provides students with the opportunity to serve as liaisons between faculty and students and experience working on committees. These opportunities will become available through faculty invitation. Interested students should consult with their faculty mentor or the Program Director to facilitate their participation.

C. Psychology Graduate Student Organization

The Psychology Graduate Student Organization (PGSO) brings together graduate students across the department's three programs: M.A. in Psychological Science, M.A. in Clinical Psychology, and Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology. The PGSO is operated by psychology graduate students. This organization's activities center around three areas: (1) advocacy of graduate student interests and needs, (2) promotion of professional development in pursuing psychology-related careers, and (3) enhancing a supportive and collegial environment among graduate students. The PGSO is a great way to get involved and to get to know your fellow students.

D. Faculty Course Evaluations

Students have the opportunity to provide feedback to their course instructors through course evaluations (called Faculty Course Questionnaires) that are administered near the end of each semester for each course. Students are also asked to provide feedback on the training they receive in the program, including mentorship, in an exit survey at the end of their program.

E. Communication

Once you are registered at UCCS, an email account will automatically be created for you. For help in finding out your email account name, setting up a new password, and managing your UCCS email account, consult the Office of Information Technology Help Desk (<https://oit.uccs.edu>). Students are required to check their UCCS email account regularly as this is the official form of communication for the department and university. Students are also required to keep the Psychology office updated as to current phone and address information.

F. Policy on Outside Employment

The psychology graduate program is intended and designed to require a full-time commitment. Successful completion of the program in a timely manner requires full-time effort. Regular employment responsibilities outside the scope of the program (i.e., activities that are not teaching assistantships or research assistantships) are likely to interfere with the development of knowledge and skills and graduating in a timely manner. Thus, outside employment is discouraged; however, students should speak with their mentor or the Program Director if outside employment is necessary.

G. Professional Organizations

We encourage students to become members of relevant professional and scientific organizations, such as the Association for Psychological Science (APS), the American Psychological Association (APA), and relevant divisions of APA. Membership in professional organizations helps students increase their identification and development as scientists and professionals in psychology. Student membership fees are usually modest. Speak with your mentor about the most appropriate organizations and societies based on your research interests.

V. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Although funding is not guaranteed, an effort is made to provide each graduate student with as much financial support as possible. This aid is in the form of fellowships, grants, teaching and research assistantships, tuition funding, and need-based aid (e.g. tuition grants, loans, and workstudy awards).

A. Financial Aid

All students should submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at the time of application to the program and no later than the deadline provided each year by the UCCS Financial Aid office (typically March 1st). If you choose not to complete the FAFSA, you may miss opportunities for all forms of aid, including no-need-based aid. The Financial Aid office will notify students of their award package. Andrea Williams (Psychology Department Administrator) has access to your financial aid information. She will work with you and the aid office to get you the maximum aid award within university guidelines and federal limits. Once you receive an award offer letter from the Financial Aid office, please contact Andrea Williams. It will be helpful to let the Psychology department be involved after your award is made by the Financial Aid office. Students may also contact the Office of Financial Aid at UCCS located in Cragmor Hall and their website is <https://finaid.uccs.edu>. More information about financial aid is included in the Appendix.

B. Teaching Assistantships and Research Assistantships

To be considered for teaching assistant (T.A.) position, you need to mark the courses that you are interested in serving as a T.A. in the application package for the program. If you did not originally express interest in serving as a T.A. on the application, but now hope to serve as T.A., please contact Andrea Williams. Andrea assigns T.A. positions typically in the middle to late summer of each year. Work-study eligibility is a factor in determining teaching and research assistant assignments.

Your faculty mentor may sometimes have funds to support you as a research assistant (R.A.). You may contact your research mentor regarding a possible R.A. appointment.

C. Graduate Research Fellowships

The campus-wide Graduate School offers Research Fellowships for graduate students. These fellowship awards are merit-based and the nomination process for most awards is initiated by the Program Director of Psychological Science based on consultation with the faculty. These awards are officially offered through the Financial Aid office. Psychology graduate students have been successful in the past in receiving these awards. See the Graduate School Financial Resources page for information about various funding opportunities (<https://graduateschool.uccs.edu/uccs-finance/finance-resources>). Continuing graduate students may apply directly from the Graduate School website.

The department awards a limited number of merit-based, out-of-state recruitment awards of \$6,000 for the first year to students with a cumulative GPA of 3.33 or higher. The recipient of an award will be notified by the Psychology Department, and the award will be reflected after the initial award in the student financial aid package.

The Psychology Department awards limited Graduate School Matching Tuition grants to students as part of the overall department fellowship funding. These awards require a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher and are awarded to MA students selected to serve as a teaching assistant or research assistant. The recipient of a grant will be notified by the Psychology Department, and the award will be reflected in the student financial aid package after July 1.

D. Work Study and Need-Based Aid

Need-based federal work study awards are need-based and offered by the Financial Aid Office as a part of your financial aid package and allow the department to hire you and be paid with federal funds. Most students with work-study awards are employed in the psychology department, which allows the department to maximize your total funding. If you do not initially receive a work-study award as part of your financial aid package, you may consider petitioning for an award by completing an “Appeal for Work Study” form available on the Student Employment Website. UCCS need-based tuition grants and Graduate Student Direct loans are offered to students as determined by the FAFSA application.

E. Research Conference Travel

Several options for funds to travel to conferences are available. These are from a) the Psychology Department, b) the Psychology Graduate Student Organization (PGSO), c) The UCCS Graduate Student Organization, d) the UCCS Graduate School, e) and the Gerontology Center (for aging-focused research) or Lyda Hill Institute for Human Resilience (for trauma research associated with the Institute). The Graduate School Research Travel Award (<https://graduateschool.uccs.edu/finance-resources>) is

initiated by students to help with the travel costs incurred from attending and presenting at a scientific conference.

If you have been approved for funding through any campus and departmental funds, you must follow departmental travel purchasing procedures. You may request up to \$400 once in a 12-month period from the Psychology Department. Request funds from the department by emailing Andrea Williams before any travel expenses are purchased. Include the email from the conference organization accepting your poster and a copy of your abstract at least a month before the planned trip. David DuBois will assist in determining reimbursable expenses.

- F. Colorado Residency Requirements:** An in-state student is one who has been a legal resident of Colorado for one year or more immediately preceding the beginning of the term for which the in-state classification is sought. Residency is established when one has a permanent place of habitation in Colorado and the intention of making Colorado one's true, fixed, and permanent home and place of habitation. Establishing residency in Colorado permits you to later pay in-state tuition. Information about how to establish residency is found through the Office of the Registrar website: <https://registrar.uccs.edu/tuition-classification>.

VI. OTHER RESOURCES

A. Graduate Student Resources in the Psychology Department.

The psychology department graduate student resources website lists information about how to search for courses, graduate student downloads, the Psychology Graduate Student Organization (PGSO), poster printing for conferences, reserving conference rooms, relevant forms, tuition residency petition, etc. This website is located here: <https://psychology.uccs.edu/resources/graduate>

B. Virtual Private Network (VPN)

A VPN creates a secure, encrypted internet connection with the university from an off-campus computer. This allows access to campus resources from an off-campus location. The most common reason for using the VPN is to obtain off-campus access to the UCCS library databases to download journal articles and other scholarly items. Information about setting up the VPN can be found on the Office of Information Technology (OIT) website: <https://oit.uccs.edu/services/network-and-internet/vpn>

C. Library

The UCCS campus library (<https://kfl.uccs.edu>) maintains an extensive collection of Psychology journals and books as well as many online research databases. Interlibrary loan and Prospector, which searches across many libraries affiliated with the University of Colorado system, are available for items not found through the

UCCS library. Students may conduct literature searches (e.g., using PsycINFO) through the library's online research databases containing journal articles and other scholarly sources. It is also possible to access the research databases from off-campus using the VPN described above. A librarian is designated to work with students and faculty in psychology. The librarian can provide tutorials or consultations on searching strategies for research studies, management of articles archives, and other library resources.

D. Computer Lab

Software programs can be accessed in person through the campus computer labs or remotely accessed through the virtual computer lab. The programs available include SPSS, AMOS, MATLAB, Adobe Photoshop, and a variety of other software. Information about the locations and operating hours for the in-person computer labs is located here: <https://oit.uccs.edu/services/smart-classrooms-open-labs>. The virtual computer lab can be remotely accessed anytime, on-campus or off-campus, through this portal: <https://virtuallabs.uccs.edu>.

E. Handbook Updates

University, Graduate School, Department, and Program requirements evolve and change. It is possible that important changes will occur before another update of this handbook. The Department will make every reasonable effort to inform you of such changes, and you must be attentive to relevant mailings and postings. **The information found in the most recent version of the handbook shall take precedence over the handbook you signed. The latest version of this handbook can be downloaded through this link:** <https://psychology.uccs.edu/resources/graduate>.

VII. APPENDIX

A. Financial Aid Opportunities. UCCS offers a variety of federal, state, and private financial aid programs to assist graduate students who need financial assistance. The relevant information, describing grants, scholarships, educational loans, and student employment is available on the website of the Office of Financial Aid: <https://finaid.uccs.edu>.

B. Thesis Proposal Guidelines

In collaboration with a faculty mentor, a student will develop and propose a research project aligned with the faculty mentor's research expertise. All students must form a thesis committee comprised of their mentor and two additional faculty members (see below for more details on committee composition), for a total of three committee members. That committee must approve the students' research plan in a formal proposal meeting conducted prior to data collection. If a student uses an existing

dataset for their thesis, a formal proposal meeting must be conducted before the student proceeds with data analysis. The proposal committee must also approve of the student's completed thesis at a formal defense meeting. The research and scientific method coursework in the MA program is designed to help the student formulate a research proposal, analyze the data collected, and write up the research manuscript.

The thesis proposal document should include a Title page, Abstract, Introduction, Method, Data Analysis Plan, References, and any additional elements an individual faculty member may require (e.g., appendices with survey measures). In general, this document should: (a) review foundational research relevant to the student's research question and (b) thoroughly explain the study's design and method so that committee members can provide critical feedback intended to strengthen the study. Proposal length will vary depending on the topic and methodology, but the body of the proposal would typically comprise up to 30 double-spaced pages (in consultation with the committee chair; excluding Title page, abstract, references, and appendices).

The student needs to deliver a formal presentation of their thesis proposal to their committee. Consult with your faculty mentor about the length and substance of this presentation (could vary across faculty). The goal of this presentation is to clearly explain extant research relevant to one's proposal and the proposed study's methodology.

In advance of the proposal meeting, the student should discuss the feasibility, timeline, and a Plan B (if the student encounters a problem while conducting their study, e.g., difficulty obtaining relevant sample) of the sample. Your faculty mentor will provide the primary guidance on their thesis project, but you should also consider your other committee members as a useful resource for advice and feedback on the project.

Specifics:

1. Select your committee and set a date. With the advice of your faculty mentor, who will serve as the Chair of your thesis committee, 2 additional faculty members, with Graduate School appointments, will serve on your MA thesis committee. Often committee members are UCCS faculty, but faculty from other institutions may also serve if they qualify for an appointment to the Graduate School. The proposal meeting must be scheduled for 2 hours, although it may end early. Get the schedules of each committee member and find a date and time that works for everybody. This is usually done through a meeting scheduling tool (e.g., Doodle Poll). Next, reserve a room for your committee meeting or set up a virtual meeting depending on the meeting format.

2. Send a reminder email and provide copies of your proposal to your committee. After a date, time, and room reservation have been settled, send your committee an email reminding them of the details. Per departmental policy, you must provide an electronic copy of your thesis proposal to each committee member at least

7 days before the proposal meeting. Failure to do so could result in a rescheduling of your meeting.

3. Prepare well. Craft an effective PowerPoint presentation and practice your presentation. Remember, the best way to decrease anxiety is to be prepared. Your presentation should be rehearsed, practiced, and polished. With questions and discussion, the full meeting will last between 90 and 120 minutes.

4. Understand the process and try to answer all questions. Understand that it is the committee's job to ask questions, give their impressions, and offer critiques. Their questions may be clarifying or challenging. Make sure to address all questions asked by your committee members. Do the best you can and offer to later look into questions you are unable to answer. A lively discussion is a good thing and indicates that your project is interesting and engaging.

5. Your proposal meeting is a contract between you and your thesis committee. After the meeting, it is your job to do what was agreed upon with your committee. You may not unilaterally change your project in any substantive way after the meeting. If changes are needed, you should discuss them with your mentor and then your committee to obtain approval for changes following the proposal meeting.

6. Be open to constructive feedback. Have an open and positive attitude. Remember, it is the job of your committee members to improve the project, ask questions, and make suggestions. A non-defensive attitude will be an asset to you during the defense.

7. Take good notes. When committee members give suggestions and feedback, make sure to write them out in detail to ensure accurate revisions to your thesis.

8. Make corrections and address suggestions. After the meeting, be sure to make the necessary changes and address any suggestions made by your committee. Your committee will want to see these changes made to your final product.

9. Prepare for success and strive for a good outcome. Be confident in the work that you have done and in your preparation for this important event.

SIGNATURE PAGE

M.A. Psychology Program in Psychological Science
Department of Psychology
University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

I hereby declare that I have read and agree to abide by the policies and procedures detailed in this Graduate Student Handbook.

Student Name