Tip Sheets

Guiding Your Way Through the UCSC Developmental Psychology Program

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Information in these documents should be consistent with any guidelines appearing in the Graduate Handbook. In the event that you find any discrepancies, please alert the Developmental Psychology Area Head.

1a. Annual Evaluation of Developmental Graduate Students' Progress

The graduate students are asked to provide 1 or 2-page annual progress reports, evaluating their achievements each year, including publications and conference presentations, courses completed, and TA assignments. They are also asked to describe their progress on research and on completion of program requirements (e.g., qualifying exam, practicum, coursework). They are asked to indicate their research goals for next year in a sentence or two, and to submit the progress report to their advisor by June 1st.

In our annual end-of-year student evaluation meeting, we review each student's progress report and file, and our evaluations of their progress, to make a summary evaluation. The summary evaluation is meant to indicate to us and to students their progress toward becoming mature researchers and scholars. The criteria are those which are customarily included in letters of reference for academic research/teaching positions, and which are employed in personnel decisions for tenure. Faculty determine whether students are either

- On Track (developing as one would expect for their stage of training),
- Needing Improvement (the advisor and student should come up with a plan to work on problem areas in which student is not On Track),
- On Probation (the program comes up with a plan for deciding whether the student fits the program, given that the majority of the faculty are concerned that the student is unlikely to be able to become prepared for a scholarly career in Developmental Psychology. This involves a formal notification to the Graduate Council which can occur at any time, not just at the yearly evaluation), or
- Terminated from Program (which occurs after a student has had formal warning that there are severe difficulties, with a chance to remediate them).

For a student to be recommended for Probation or for Termination from the Program, a faculty vote must be taken, with 51% supporting the decision.

The evaluation is communicated to the student and to the student's file via a formal hardcopy letter, which is signed by the area head and the student's advisor, as well as the department chair. (In the case of students who are temporarily without an advisor, the letter is from the area head with the chair's signature.) The letters are based on the discussion at the evaluation meeting, which focuses on specific areas of professional development plus an overall evaluation.

At the time of the second-year evaluation (i.e, the end of the second year), the student's advisor and second reader make recommendations for the Developmental faculty to consider in judging whether the student is providing evidence of becoming ready to undertake doctoral research and to be an independent scholar/researcher. This is a formal judgment of suitability to continue into doctoral work. Severe doubts among the program faculty would lead to formally placing the student on probation (which can also occur before or after the end of the second year), and making a plan that provides the student with concrete objectives that both provide training and allow definitive evaluation over the next quarter or two.

By the end of the second year, the student should be on track in completing program requirements, with responsible participation in most phases of research in one or a combination of projects. The student should be developing in competence to speak and write about a study's question and rationale, the instantiation of the question in the particular project, the method, the population, the abstraction/coding of data, the analysis of data, and conclusions and generalizations from the data. It is not expected for the student to have carried out all phases of research, or to be able to talk/write about a project at the same level as a PhD.   At the time of the qualifying exam, students should exhibit the competence that one would expect for being ready to begin work on their dissertation. This involves being knowledgeable in the field and in the research area of the likely area of their dissertation work, beginning to articulate their own stance on issues in the area, and becoming skilled in discerning both the forest and the trees in the literature.

At the time of completion of the dissertation, students are expected to have taken major responsibility for all phases of research listed above, as well as gathering original data and designing a study. This could be done in the dissertation study or in other research.

1b. Worksheet for Student Evaluations

Student _____ Year in program ____Advisor _____ Date _____

Student's professional development– On Track (OT), Needs Improvement (NI), or Weak (W)

Breadth of knowledge in developmental psychology and related literatures, both theoretical and empirical
Depth of knowledge of theory and research providing background for student's research
Understanding of phenomenon being investigated

Interest in research area/ initiative
Originality and intellectual leadership in research and scholarship

Beginning to think of a **program** of research
Setting **realistic goals**
Ability to **move fluently** between the details of research and the conceptualization

Skill with **methodological/statistical tools** of the research area
Careful attention to details and organization
Perseverance/ effort/ timeliness

Skill in **oral presentation** of research and ideas
Skill in **written presentation** of research and ideas
Critical and constructive thinking
Appropriate willingness to **speculate**
Appropriate caution in drawing conclusions from data

Interest in **continuing to learn**/ adaptability/ seeking and responding to feedback
Constructive contribution to group functioning (leadership and support of others, and accountability)
Good relations with people (e.g., research participants, assistants, peers, supervisor)
Making **connections** with colleagues at other sites

Achievements
Publications
Scholarly presentations
Teaching
Other professional activities (reviewing, grantwriting)

Program requirements --
      First year research participation & report
      Second year research participation & report
      Full writeup of Beginning Research project
      Coursework
      Practicum
      Qualifying exam proposal
      Qualifying exam completed
      Dissertation prospectus approved
      Dissertation approved

Overall evaluation: On track__ Needs imp.__ Prob.__ Term.__
Second Year: Suitability for doctoral work?
Yes__ Probation__ No__ Decision delayed (with deadline) __

2. Phases of Research

Student's name_____ Date _____Year in program _____

      This checklist is intended to help students track their development in research and as an informal means of communication between students and advisors regarding involvement with each phase of research so far. Each student and advisor (with the support of the program and committee) will tailor the research involvements in order to prepare students for the goal of a research career beyond UCSC.

      By the time students finish the PhD they should have taken some leadership in all phases of research (in one project, or across several projects).

      First and second year research should involve students in the phases of the full research cycle; depending on students' previous research experience and the nature of the research projects available, some students may focus more heavily on some phases of the research cycle than do other students in the first two years. By the time they finish the second year, students should be developing competence to speak and write about a study's question and rationale, the instantiation of the question in the particular project, the method, the population, the abstraction/coding of data, the analysis of data, and conclusions and generalizations from the data. And they should have had responsible participation in most phases of research in one or a combination of projects.

Research Phase	I'm still in the dark	Heard about it secondhand	Participated (supportive role)	Some leadership
Getting a general idea and connecting it with the literature				
Focusing the idea				
Moving the idea to researchable plan				
Collecting data				
Understanding how the data fit the larger context for participants				
Developing a coding system and training coders				
Coding data				
Checking reliability				
Organizing and graphing data				
Systematically analyzing data				
Writing the results				
Writing up: situating findings in the literature				
Submitting paper, getting it rejected, revising				
Talking and writing about the research in a flexible way (e.g., 3 min vs 30 min version)				

3a. Professional Practicum in Developmental Psychology

<u>Purpose</u>. The purpose of the professional practicum is to provide the student with training in a new skill or area pertinent to the student's career goals. This requirement may be satisfied in a number of ways, including demonstrating competence in a foreign language for a professional purpose such as translating articles, learning how to carry out an advanced statistical technique and giving a workshop on the technique for interested faculty and students, creating a computer program to automate some component of a research project, or doing community-based work in settings where knowledge concerning developmental psychology is being applied. The practicum can commence any time after spring quarter of the second year, and should be completed by the end of the third year. It must be completed before the quals. It can occur concurrently with finishing up required coursework and the second year project. The proposal needs to precede the project.

<u>Practicum Proposal</u>. Once the student and advisor have settled on an idea for the student's practicum, the student should summarize the proposed practicum activity, explain how the practicum facilitates the development of a <u>new skill</u>, and explain why this new skill is important for the student's professional development. This summary should be submitted on the 1-page Practicum Proposal form (attached).

<u>Final Report</u>. To complete the practicum, the student should submit a final report to the advisor, get the advisor's signature, and turn in the signed report to the program head. The report, maximally 2 pages in length, should summarize the practicum experience, focusing on what the student has learned and why this is useful for his or her professional development.

3b. Proposal for Practicum Activity
Developmental Psychology

Name:_____

1. In the space below, please summarize your proposed practicum activity (What, when, where?)

2. In the space below, please explain how this practicum allows you to develop a <u>new skill</u> and why this new skill is important for your professional development (How and Why?)

Submit this petition to the graduate advisers. Please do not start your practicum until the graduate advisers approve your proposal.

Student Signature:_____   Date:_____

Adviser's signature: _____

APPROVAL:

Program Head: _____   Date:_____

Your final report (maximum two pages) should summarize your practicum experience, focusing on what you learned and why this is useful to y our professional development. Also, if appropriate, please provide the name of a contact person and address/phone number in case future students are interested in a similar practicum...

4a. Qualifying Exam in Developmental Psychology

Purpose. The qualifying exam is intended to assess knowledge of developmental psychology and the capacity to synthesize ideas potentially relevant to one's dissertation topic. Additional goals of the qualifying exam are to develop presentation and discussion skills with faculty, and to increase skills in analyzing and applying professional literature to research interests. The role of the exam committee members is to help the student prepare for the exam by guiding the focus, selection, and analysis of the literature. The advisor works closely with the student throughout the process. The other committee members consult once on the proposal, read the final quals paper, and participate in the oral quals.

Pre-requisites. Completion of all coursework, practicum, and the final draft of the second year project are required by the time of the oral exam.

Topics and Reading Lists. In concert with his/her advisor, and then with members of the QEC, the student should frame 3 topics to review, based on the list in the Handbook. Topics should be chosen that represent the student's deep and enduring research interests, that are sufficiently broad to enable an assessment of the student's knowledge of issues central to developmental psychology, that span both empirical and theoretical literatures, and that contain aspects that can be synthesized into one (or two) integrative papers. Because the qualifying exam is partly intended to lay the foundation for writing the dissertation, we encourage students to select literature and topics relevant to their dissertation research.

A good strategy is to first develop, in concert with your advisor, a brief (1-2 sentence) description of each topic, along with a list of key references, and a paragraph describing the theme or argument that the written qual addresses. Once you have sketched out the basic contents, you will be more clear about whom to ask to be members of your QEC. Then approach potential committee members with your sketch, and go from there.

Qualifying Exam Committee (QEC). The student should compose a QEC at least 3 months before the intended date of the oral exam. The four-member committee should consist of at least 2 Developmental Psychology faculty and at least 1 tenured outside member (a non-UCSC psychologist may also be appropriate, or faculty at another university). (See attached document on "Orientation for Outside Members of Qualifying Exam Committee.") The Chair of the QEC must be a tenured faculty member and cannot be the student's main academic advisor. The Chair's role is limited to managing the oral exam meeting, while the student's primary advisor assists with the written exam. Committee composition is subject to approval by the Graduate Affairs Committee and the campus-wide Graduate Council.

The topics, reading lists, and theme for the written exam must be approved by the QEC at least 2 months before the oral exam. The reading lists may change slightly by the time of the oral exam, but should be essentially solid by this point.

The exact time and place of the oral exam must be submitted to the Psychology Department at least 30 days before the exam so that the Department can notify the Graduate Council. The Department will also need a list of the QEC members at that time, to secure approval from the Graduate Council.

Written Exam. The written part of the exam should take the form of a reasonably focused conceptual paper or papers along the lines of <u>Psychological Bulletin</u>, <u>Psychological Review</u>, or <u>Developmental Review</u>; the paper(s) should not be as broad as reviews in <u>Annual Review of Psychology.</u> The paper(s) is not intended to cover everything on the reading list; rather, the reading list is intended to be more comprehensive than is the paper. The paper should focus on a theme rather than simply reporting the literature. Think of it as a draft of a contribution to the literature. Maximum total pages should be 40 (the Handbook suggests 20-25).

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In most cases, the student's advisor will work with the student on multiple drafts of the papers(s). The other committee members will only be expected to read the version that will be the basis for the oral exam. Committee members (other than the advisor) are usually not expected to talk with the student before the exam to give the student feedback on the paper or on possible questions, although the committee members may choose to do so. The paper(s) and the final reading lists should be distributed to the committee at least 2 weeks before the oral exam.

Oral Exam. The oral exam provides a forum for committee members to provide the student feedback about the written exam, and to gauge the student's understanding and analysis of material on the reading list. The oral exam is intended to be more than an evaluation of the quality of the student's work. Ideally, the oral exam becomes a forum in which the student and faculty can exchange and develop ideas about mutually relevant theories and research. The oral exam is <u>not</u> the prospectus meeting for the dissertation, although discussion of dissertation direction can occur.

Two hours should be scheduled for the exam, with the aim of finishing everything within 1-1/2 hours. The Chair of the Committee manages the meeting itself, makes sure all Committee members have a chance to ask their questions, and reports the results of the exam to the Graduate Council. One common format for the oral exam is for the student to give a 10 minute presentation at the beginning of the oral, summarizing the major themes of his or her paper(s). After this, the faculty ask questions about the paper and the material on the reading lists. The student then temporarily leaves the room so that faculty can discuss the student's performance. The outcome of the exam is then communicated to the student. Written comments can be given to the student by committee members at the end of the oral if they will be helpful to the student in revising the paper for publication.

Students who fail all or part of the examination may repeat it once. Two failures on the oral examination will mean that the student cannot continue in the program. On occasion a student will receive a "provisional pass" if an area needs further work for the outcome to be considered a clear pass. This option is only used if the faculty feel relatively confident that the remaining step is feasible for the student to complete in a month or two. The faculty specify which areas need attention and how to work on it. Changing a provisional pass into a clear pass does not require another meeting of the committee; it can occur with each committee member signing off when the step is completed. Alternatively, any committee member can request another meeting, or can delegate to a portion of the committee the responsibility for supervising completion of the step. When the student passes the exam, he or she is advanced to candidacy.

Timeline. To summarize the six steps involved:

(1) Beginning at least 3 months before the intended date of the exam, select a Qualifying Exam Committee with whom to collaborate in developing topics, reading lists, and a theme for the qualifying exam, and to decide upon whether to write one or two papers.

(2) At least 2 months before the exam, secure approval of the topics, the reading lists, and the theme for the qualifying exam from the QEC and the Graduate Affairs Committee.

(3) As work proceeds, submit drafts of the paper(s) to your advisor.

(4) At least 30 days before the intended date of the oral exam, schedule the time, date, and location of the oral exam; submit this schedule, along with the names of the QEC, to the Psychology Department Office (Evelyn), who will then send the information to the campus-wide Graduate Council for approval.

(5) No later than 2 weeks before the oral exam, submit a copy of the final reading lists and paper(s) to each member of the QEC.

(6) Take oral exam.

4b. Orientation for Outside Members of Qualifying Exam Committee

The overall goal of the orals is to engage the candidate in discourse about issues that arose in reading the qualifying paper, and to determine whether the candidate seems to have bridged several research areas competently and deeply, showing sufficient preparation to undertake a dissertation. We do not expect the qualifying paper to be an introduction section of the dissertation, but rather to be more like a review paper, on the lines of articles in *Developmental Review* or similar journals, with some potential lines of inquiry sketched out for future research.

About a week before the date of the orals, or at the point that the committee members have read the paper, the chair or advisor may contact members of the committee to ask if they feel the meeting should proceed--that is, do they feel that the paper is sufficiently developed to warrant an orals meeting? This doesn't mean "is the paper excellent?" but rather, "is the paper sufficient to proceed with the orals?" We do this because sometimes the paper is not sufficiently developed to assess the candidate's suitability for embarking on the dissertation phase. [In such cases, the meeting was scheduled prematurely, before a solid draft of the paper had emerged, so we decide to postpone the meeting].

Committee members decide how many drafts of the paper to read; most (except for the advisor) just want to see one draft, the most solid draft ("solid" being determined by the advisor). Some tell the candidate beforehand the kinds of questions that arose in reading the paper so that the can candidate has time to ponder them; not everyone does this.

In terms of the structure of the meeting, we start by sending the candidate out of the room for about 5-10 minutes so we can discuss our overall impressions of the paper, the kinds of questions we are interested in posing, and our thoughts about the quality of the paper. We then bring the candidate back in and ask him/her to give a brief presentation of the major ideas in the paper. Then we take turns asking questions, which ideally becomes more of a dialogue than a grilling. Committee members usually ask questions that emerged while reading the paper, although anything on the candidate's reading list (which is more inclusive than the paper itself) could be addressed since the reading list was constructed with the help of all the committee members. Sometimes we ask, "What did you learn from this?" to direct the conversation in a direction that illuminates the candidate's passions. Usually, though, the questions are more focused and reflect some combination of ideas in the paper and the interests of the questioner.

If the candidate seems to have a really good grasp of the topic areas and the integrative paper seems very good, we sometimes steer the latter part of the discussion in the direction of possible topics for a dissertation. However, the orals meeting is not intended to be a proposal meeting for the dissertation (that is the next step, the proposal and the proposal meeting).

When everyone's questions are exhausted (about 1-1/2 hours), the candidate once again is asked to step out of the room so that we can discuss our impressions with regard to the candidate's grasp and integration of the topic areas, and conceptual and methodological sophistication for undertaking a dissertation. Then we bring him/her back in to convey our consensus. The consensus usually falls into one of three categories 1) full pass 2) qualified pass (revise the paper within about two weeks, as per suggestions), or
3) major problems (overhaul the paper and redo the process).

Occasionally the candidate asks permission to invite one or two other graduate students to the orals so that they can get a feel for what happens at this stage of graduate work (such students are usually close to the same stage). In that event, the guest students try to melt into the woodwork so that their presence is not very obvious.

5. The Dissertation Process in Developmental Psychology

The dissertation process involves working closely with the research advisor on all phases of the research and writing. The other committee members are involved only in reading and responding to the final proposal and the final writeup of the project. On occasion, they may be involved to a greater extent if they choose to be.

1. **The dissertation proposal**. This involves a full proposal, a meeting of the committee, and a 2-page summary that the committee signs. It is during this process that the faculty and student come to an agreement about the scope and procedures of the project. This protects the student from faculty adding ideas later. It also protects in case results do not come out as expected — that does not matter as long as the student has carried out a study that is well designed, with the faculty's approval. Only pilot data collection and pilot coding should occur before approval of the project, as the purpose of the meeting is to come to agreement on the question and procedures of the study.

The <u>full proposal</u> must therefore involve a clear statement of the question to be addressed, the participants to be involved, the procedures and drafts of coding schemes to be used (and how they relate to the question), and the projected analyses. Literature background should be limited to work that helps readers understand the specific question and study proposed. It is like a grant proposal. It is assumed that some aspects of the study will change between the approved proposal and the final report (as with grants), because researchers learn better how to do the project as they become immersed in it. However, the proposal must give sufficient detail that the committee can evaluate the plan. Piloting procedures is a good idea before the proposal meeting.

The full proposal is expected to have gone through many drafts with the advisor before a final version is submitted to the committee. Suggested length of the proposal is 20 to 30 double-spaced pages. (The page limit that the NSF uses for proposals is 15 single-spaced pages.)

The full proposal should be given to the committee members two weeks before their individual feedback is expected from committee members (which is usually 2-3 days before the formal proposal meeting, longer if individual committee members agree to this upon being asked by the student). Committee members are not obliged to give feedback in advance of the meeting, but it is expected that they usually will, if requested by the student and sufficient time is allowed. Any committee member who has very serious concerns about the written proposal should communicate this to the advisor, so the student and advisor can consider delaying the dissertation proposal meeting to provide time for further drafts.

The <u>proposal meeting</u> consists of a 1 1/2 hour to 2 hour meeting (maximum), which follows a script that varies somewhat according to individual circumstances. Here it is, in general:

First, the faculty spends 5 minutes with the student out of the room, identifying the key issues that each committee member would like to make sure get discussed in the meeting. This helps manage the time so that discussion does not spend too long on a particular direction at the expense of others. The issues are merely identified at this point, not discussed. (The advisor generally has trouble avoiding answering concerns, but since this is the student's job, the advisor and committee members try to avoid addressing the advisor first on questions even though dissertations almost always closely involve the advisor. A hard job for the advisor, and may take a student by surprise if they don't know why the advisor is not chiming in as much as usual!)

Next, the student spends 10-15 minutes giving an overview of the project. Generally, this should be a brief statement of the question and its rationale and an overview of the procedures. It is usually valuable for students to come prepared with brief handouts indicating information such as diagrams of the design of the study and overviews of specific procedures (e.g., the questions to be asked of participants, the script of an experimental study, an outline of the coding scheme to be applied — these

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have generally been supplied in the full proposal or may be abstracted from it for the proposal meeting).

Then discussion among the student and faculty occurs for about an hour.

Then the student (and any observers, if 1 or 2 are present) are asked to leave the room so faculty can discuss the project and the student's preparation for it, for about 15 minutes. (Length of time should not be taken as a prognosis for the anxiously awaiting student! Sometimes faculty get excited about a topic and get taken up with it.)

Finally, the student (with no observers) is invited back in for the faculty's feedback, which can include a go-ahead on the project as proposed (rare!); changes to be implemented and/or suggestions for improvement of the project (common); or a decision that another proposal and full or partial committee meeting are needed if the project proposed is premature or flawed or the student seems not to be prepared to carry it out (occasional, but this should not occur more than once for a student).

A 2-page abstract of the proposal is the document that the committee signs within two weeks of the proposal meeting. The committee members' signatures indicate their agreement that the dissertation project should proceed; it reflects any major changes in the proposal that result from the proposal meeting. The abstract is a single-spaced document listing the committee members, the date of the proposal meeting and of the abstract itself, and providing a succinct summary of the background, question, participants, methods, and analyses to be used in the study (no references). Leave space for signatures and dates at the bottom of page 2. A copy of the signed proposal abstract is to be given to the Department Office for the student's file, and other copies are to be distributed to each of the developmental faculty. A copy will be kept in the Developmental Area file for future students to use as a model for format and content.

2. **Carry out the dissertation research**. This is done in close collaboration with the faculty advisor.

3. **Report the dissertation findings**. This involves a written report and a committee meeting. The written report is done in close collaboration with the faculty advisor, with many drafts completed before the student and advisor determine that the dissertation report is ready to be submitted to the committee. The written dissertation is intended to be a draft of a paper to be submitted for publication. It is to follow APA format, and is usually 40 or 50 pages long. (The draft usually requires extensive editing-down to get close to the length of a paper to submit for journal submission — usually 20 to 30 pages.) Information that seems essential for the committee but does not fit in the text can be included in Appendices to the dissertation.

The dissertation should be given to the committee members two weeks before their individual feedback is expected from committee members (which is usually 2-3 days before the formal dissertation report meeting, longer if individual committee members agree to this upon being asked by the student). Committee members are not obliged to give feedback in advance of the meeting, but it is expected that they usually will. Any committee member who has very serious concerns about the written report should communicate this to the advisor, so the student and advisor can consider delaying the dissertation report meeting to provide time for further drafts.

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The script for the dissertation report meeting is roughly the same as that for the proposal meeting, except that the student's 10-minute presentation focuses on describing how the main results obtained answer the question the dissertation was designed to address. A handout or two highlighting the main results (copied or abstracted from the dissertation) are often helpful.

The endpoint of a dissertation is actually its publication, so the dissertation report meeting often takes the form of committee members assisting the student and advisor in how to communicate their findings for submission for publication. It also provides an endpoint to the writing process, making it so that students do not have to go back and forth with each committee member until each is separately satisfied with the dissertation. It puts responsibility on faculty to come to some agreement about the project, in a context where faculty work together colleagially for the improvement and completion of the project and the student's completion of training. It also contributes to the student's education through the chance to hear faculty discussion of the project and to clarify their own explanation of it, as they gain greater perspective on it as a process of communication in the meeting. It is excellent preparation for the student's next phase of career (job talks, interviews, preparing for tenure) and for their becoming able to contribute to the field's understanding of human development through communicating their research findings in writing and in person.

Usually, the report meeting results in consolidated advice from the committee for the revision of the dissertation draft, and the committee members sign the written dissertation after they have read and approved the revised dissertation manuscript. Occasionally, the needed changes are sufficiently minor that the committee is able to sign at the time of the dissertation report meeting.