PSYCHOLOGICAL AND BRAIN SCIENCES

Graduate Student Handbook

Updated: 3/20/2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences (PBSI) in the College of Arts & Sciences at Texas A&M University is a recognized leader in psychological science and features doctoral training programs in Behavioral and Cellular Neuroscience (BCN), Clinical Psychology (CLYP), Cognition and Cognitive Neuroscience (CCN), Industrial and Organizational Psychology (I/O), and Social and Personality Psychology (SPP). All of these programs share two common goals:

- To prepare students to conduct high quality research, to direct research by others, and to communicate research findings through teaching and writing.

- To prepare students for careers in academic settings or organizations that involve practical solutions to personal, social, or organizational problems.

This handbook provides detailed information about Department, College, and University policies that are pertinent to graduate training. You will find information on a range of topics, including specific PBSI training area requirements, university level doctoral degree requirements, graduate student rights and responsibilities, and roadmaps for efficiently pursuing the degree.

It is, however, unlikely that this handbook will answer every single question that might come up, and specific requirements and processes change frequently in universities as large as TAMU. The information presented in the handbook is current as of 4/29/2023. The Associate Head of Graduate Studies will provide updates about any information that may have changed since the handbook was last updated.

DEPARTMENT CONTACTS

Department Head (DH): Dr. Mindy Bergman (mindybergman@tamu.edu)
Associate Department Head: Dr. Joseph Orr (joseph.orr@tamu.edu)
Associate Head of Graduate Studies (AHGS): Dr. Matthew Vess (vess@tamu.edu)
Associate Head of Undergraduate Studies: Dr. Rebecca Schlegel (beccaschlegel@tamu.edu)

Graduate Staff Advisor: Lauren Smith – (laurensmith@tamu.edu)
Department Administrative Executive: Jen Fraustro (jenfrosty12@tamu.edu)
Department Administrative Associative: Audra Garcia (amgarcia@tamu.edu)

Department IT Specialist: Oran Thompson (liberalartsit@tamu.edu)
Department Business Associate: Fritzie Freeman (ffreeman@tamu.edu)
Department HR Generalist: Aislyn Meadows (aislynnmeadows@tamu.edu)

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Doctoral training *should* be challenging. We expect students to develop into independent scholars with the highest level of expertise in their particular training area. Students should therefore master knowledge and skills at levels beyond what might constitute an "A" in an undergraduate course. That is what a PhD signifies and requires.

Faculty and staff in our department and the university are here to help students navigate this intense graduate training process, but students must ultimately take full responsibility for their own development. **We expect students to know and meet their degree requirements, to be aware of fiscal deadlines and work with our business office to comply with state and university regulations, to responsibly perform duties in their assistantships, to show students, faculty, and staff respect, and to represent our department and university well.**

Advisor and Advisee Expectations

The advisor/advisee relationship is the core of our graduate training model. Graduate students receive individualized training in their advisor's laboratory to develop into independent scholars in particular areas of scholarship. Because of this, each student will have different experiences in their graduate training. This is a strength because it allows for students to receive individualized training tailored to their career goals.

At the same time, there are uniform standards that all students and advisors in our programs should expect.

1. The training environment will be safe, respectful, honest, and intellectually challenging. Advisors and advisees will respect the bounds of the professional relationship and communicate clearly with one another. Diversity in backgrounds, needs, and goals will be recognized and appreciated.
2. Advisors and advisees will understand and adhere to the ethical guidelines of the University and Department (https://orec.tamu.edu/), as well as the professional guidelines of their discipline (e.g., APA).
3. Specific expectations, responsibilities, and work-related processes (e.g., typical working hours, absences) in each individual laboratory will be clearly communicated and congruent with university policies and the law.

Multiple Roles and Responsibilities

Graduate students in our program often hold two related, yet very distinct roles. They are students in the sense that they are enrolled in degree programs at Texas A&M University. They are also employees in the sense that they hold paid assistantships. Each of these roles come with particular responsibilities and conflicts can exist between them. As one example, certain forms of speech (e.g., political advocacy) might be perfectly acceptable in the role of a student, but problematic as an employee of the state of Texas. Students should remain cognizant of the different responsibilities/expectations that exist in their multiple roles and, when in doubt, consult with faculty and staff about appropriate conduct.

Aggie Honor Code

For many years, Aggies have followed a Code of Honor, which is stated in this very simple verse: An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do. The Aggie Code of Honor is an effort to unify the aims of all Texas A&M students toward a high code of ethics and personal dignity. For most, living under this code will be no problem, as it asks nothing of a person that is beyond reason. It only calls for honesty and integrity, characteristics that Aggies have always exemplified. The Aggie Code of Honor functions as a symbol to all Aggies, promoting understanding and loyalty to truth and confidence in each other.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Navigating and keeping track of all the doctoral degree plan requirements at TAMU can be a chore. Part of the reason for this difficulty is that the requirements exist at multiple levels. For example, all doctoral students are governed by universal doctoral degree requirements set by the Graduate School. These include things like preliminary examinations, doctoral degree timelines, and credit-hour requirements. Within PBSI, however, each specific training area has its own curriculum and mechanisms for meeting Graduate School doctoral degree requirements. For example, the Clinical and I/O programs require a Master's thesis in route to the PhD, while our other training areas do not.

This section of the handbook describes the doctoral degree requirements that students in our program must meet. The section is organized from the "top-down." General Graduate School requirements are described first, followed by PBSI requirements for all doctoral students, followed by specific area requirements and curriculums.

General Graduate School Requirements

Core Graduate School requirements are described below. Students should also consult Graduate School resources for additional information and full descriptions of Graduate School policies and procedures.

Graduate School "Steps-to-the-PhD" https://grad.tamu.edu/academics/degree-completion/steps-to-doctoral-degree
Graduate and Professional Catalog https://catalog.tamu.edu/graduate/#text

Credit Hours

The Graduate and Professional School requires a minimum of 96 credit hours for the doctoral degree. This total includes hours earned for research activities via PBSI 685 and PBSI 691. Full time status for doctoral students is 9 CR per semester in the Spring and Fall. Full time status in the summer for doctoral students is 6 CR.

The Graduate and Professional School requires 32 credit hours for a master's degree. **Students in the Clinical and I/O programs will therefore complete 32 credit hours for the master's degree and a minimum of 64 additional hours for the doctoral degree.**

Students who earned a master's degree from another university prior to admission into our program must complete at least 64 credit hours at TAMU for a doctoral degree. These students might exceed 64 hours, however, depending on the nature of their prior graduate coursework and whether it meets the specific expectations of the student's doctoral training area. Students entering with a master's degree should discuss these issues with their advisor, training area head, and the Associate Head for Graduate Studies upon admission.

Some degree plans may exceed the minimum number of credit hours due to specific curriculum requirements. Faculty advisors and training area heads can provide more details about these situations.

Advisory Committees

Graduate students at Texas A&M are to be guided by faculty advisory committees. Any member of the Graduate Faculty at TAMU can serve on an advisory committee. You can find a full list of graduate committee faculty here.

Typically, the student's primary advisor serves as the committee chair. On special occasions, experts from outside TAMU can serve on a student's committee. Please discuss this option with the Associate Head for Graduate Studies.

Clinical and I/O students will first create an advisory committee to supervise their Master's Thesis. The M.S. advisory

committee consists of at least three faculty members, with one member selected from a department other than PBSI. The committee chair will advise the student with respect to selection of other committee members. Discussions about forming the committee should begin during the student's first year in the program.

**** Deadline:*** **The Master's advisory committee must be formed by March 1st of the student's first year.**

A doctoral advisory committee will guide preliminary examination and dissertation processes. The doctoral advisory committee consists of at least 4 faculty members, with one member selected from a department other than PBSI. The committee chair will advise the student with respect to selection of other committee members. Discussions about forming the committee should begin early in the student's third semester in the program (Fall of 2nd year).

**** Deadline:*** **The Doctoral advisory committee must be formed by the 8th week of the student's third semester.**

Students may request a change in the membership of their advisory committee at any time. A petition to request change of committee members may be submitted online using the Document Processing Submission System (DPSS) at: https://ogsdpss.tamu.edu). You can contact the Graduate Advisor if you need further assistance with this procedure.

Degree Plans

https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/miscellaneous/review-student-degree-plans-and-petitions

All graduate students are required to file a degree plan that corresponds to the degree they are pursuing. The degree plan is the official listing of coursework for the degree, and it is the formal declaration of a graduate advisory committee. Failure to meet the deadlines for degree plan submission will result in a "block" on the student's account. This "block" prevents students from being able to register for courses in subsequent semesters.

Clinical and I/O students will need to submit two separate degree plans during their time in the program. They will submit a Master's degree plan and a doctoral degree plan. To add the Master's degree plan, however, these students will also need to submit an MDD form to add a secondary degree, the Master's degree, to their student record.

- Clinical and I/O students must submit an MDD to add the Psychology Master's degree as a secondary degree. Once the MDD is approved, they will be able to submit a master's degree plan. Information about the MDD process can be found here.
- Clinical and I/O students must submit a Master's degree plan to the Graduate School by March 1 of their first year.

All students in the program are required to have an approved doctoral degree plan on file with the Graduate School by the beginning of the fourth semester in the program (Spring of 2nd year). Because of the processing time required, all students should submit their doctoral degree plan by the 8th week of the Fall Semester in their 2nd program year. This means, of course, that Clinical and I/O students will submit a doctoral degree plan prior to the completion of the Master's degree. This is okay and required by the College of Arts and Sciences.

All degree plans are submitted using the online Document Processing Submission System (DPSS) at: https://ogsdpss.tamu.edu. The degree plan may be changed at any time by filing on online petition using the DPSS. **Changes in degree plans are common; they are often the rule rather than the exception.**

Steps to File a Degree Plan once a Graduate Advisory Committee is Formed:

1. Consult your area curriculum documents and discuss your plans with the chair of your advisory committee.

2. Create and submit the degree via DPSS
3. Submit the degree plan via DPSS
    - The pre-committee staff approver is the PBSI Graduate Staff Advisor.
    - The DH or intercollegiate faculty chairperson on the degree plan is the PBSI Associate Head for Graduate Studies.
4. The submitted degree plan will route for approval from Graduate Staff Advisor (pre-committee), the committee chair, all committee members, and the Associate Head for Graduate Studies.
5. Once approved, the degree plan will then forward electronically to the Graduate School for final processing and approval.
6. The Graduate School will notify you (and AHGS) by email when the degree plan has been formally approved.

Formal Master's Thesis Process (Clinical and I/O Students Only)

Clinical and I/O students must follow the Graduate School's requirements for completing a Master's Thesis. There are several steps to this process, including the submission of a research proposal approval form, applying for the degree, and successfully defending the Master's Thesis. The Graduate School sets the deadlines for all of these steps. Students must be aware of and adhere to those deadlines.

The formal steps to the Master's Thesis can be found here.

Preliminary Examination for Doctoral Students

Doctoral students must pass a preliminary examination on their way to the PhD. These examinations can take different forms, depending on the training area.

Preliminary Examination for each Training Area:

- BCN: Research Proposal or Major Area Paper and Oral Defense
- CCN: Major Area Paper and Oral Defense
- Clinical: Dissertation Proposal and Oral Defense of that Proposal
- I/O: Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination
- SPP: Dissertation Proposal and Oral Defense of that Proposal

**** Deadline:*** **The preliminary exam must be completed no later than the end of the semester following the completion of the formal coursework on the degree plan. Results must be received by The Graduate and Professional School 10 working days after exam date.** The report form can be found here.

Formal Doctoral Dissertation Process

Doctoral students must follow the Graduate School's requirements for completing the Doctoral Dissertation. There are several steps to this process, including the submission of a research proposal form, applying for the degree, and successfully defending the dissertation. The Graduate School sets the deadlines for all of these steps. Students must be aware of and adhere to those deadlines.

The formal steps to the Dissertation and Doctoral Degree can be found here.

General PBSI Requirements

Sustained Research Activity

We expect students to begin involvement in research with their primary mentor as soon as (or before) they begin graduate study. Psychological science and research training are the primary focus of our graduate program, and therefore the bulk of students' time and effort should be devoted to conducting and disseminating research. Research activity in our program includes more than the doctoral dissertation project and PBSI 691 credits. Experience in all parts of the research process, ranging from idea generation, to IRB preparation, to data collection, to data management and analysis, to the development of manuscripts and scholarly presentations, is critical.

What reasonably constitutes sustained research activity will fluctuate from semester to semester and across students. For example, the minimum research expectations for a student taking a full load of content courses, performing clinical work, and working as a Graduate Teaching Assistant will generally be less than for a student taking 1 class and being funded by a Graduate Research Assistant position. The annual advisor/advisee compacts (see below) should detail what is expected to fulfill the sustained research activity requirement each semester/year. Expectations should be reasonable in relation to other demands on students' time commitments (e.g., clinical training, coursework, etc.).

It is also important to note that meeting the expectation for sustained research activity is central to making progress towards the degree and developing broader educational and career skills. PBSI doctoral programs require a formal dissertation research project to meet Texas A&M's standards for the conferral of a doctoral degree. In order to be able to effectively complete the dissertation project, as well as other program related research projects (e.g., the first year PBSI research project), students must develop research competencies commensurate with the expectations of a doctoral degree. This requires considerable practical experience in conducting research. Sustained research activity is thus critically important for a student's ability make adequate progress towards the PhD and fulfill its research training expectations.

Course Work

Methods and Statistics. Proficiency in methodology and statistics is foundational to graduate study in psychology. **All graduate students take PBSI 607 (Experimental Psychology) and PBSI 671 (Experimental Design for Behavioral Scientists) during their first year in the program and must earn a grade of B or better in both courses.**

Breadth Courses. **All students are required to take two graduate Psychology courses (6 credit hours) outside their specific training area.** The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that students acquire breadth of knowledge in psychology beyond their specialty area. Graduate level survey courses and specialty seminars (e.g., PBSI 689) offered by faculty outside the student's training area can be used to satisfy this departmental requirement. In addition, students can petition their training area to permit them to substitute one graduate course taught outside of PBSI to count towards the breadth requirement. This option must be approved by the primary advisor and training area. All breadth courses must be completed with a grade of B or higher.

Area Specific Course Requirements. In addition to the general course requirements noted above, each training area has its own list of required courses that must be completed. These area specific curricula are designed to ensure that students acquire the depth of knowledge in their particular training area that would be expected from someone holding a doctoral degree in that area. Details about each area's curriculum requirements can be found in each training area's specific handbook.

First Year Graduate Student Seminar

A first-year professional development seminar (PBSI 691) is required for all first-year graduate students. This series provides initial training in teaching introductory psychology (PBSI 107) and laboratory courses in statistics (PBSI 301) and experimental psychology (PBSI 302). These trainings are required by Texas law for all graduate teaching assistants. We require students in our program, regardless of whether they currently possess a graduate teaching assistantship, to complete the training during their first semester. Other topics in the seminar include professional ethics in research, IRB policies and compliance, grant writing for NIH-NRSA and NSF fellowships, and exposure to PBSI graduate student policies and procedures.

First Year Research Project

We expect graduate students to work closely on research projects with faculty and other graduate students. To facilitate this research involvement for new students, first-year students are required to carry out a first-year research project with their advisor. This research project typically represents a collaboration between students and faculty, but does not need to be an independent project designed by students. The nature of the project is determined through consultation with the primary advisor, and students should plan to initiate a discussion of this requirement with their advisors early in their first semester.

Second Year Poster Presentation

Students must present the results of their first-year research project in an annual poster session held during their second year in the program. The poster session provides a forum for students to demonstrate what they have done and learned during their first year of training. All posters are evaluated by a group of PBSI faculty and awards are given to the highest rated presentations. Details about this event are provided in the First Year Graduate Student Seminar.

Specific Training Area Curricula Requirements

Each area also has a number of specific requirements. These requirements can be found in the specific training area documents.

- BCN Documents
- CCN Documents
- Clinical Documents
- I/O Documents
- SPP Documents

PBSI Doctoral Program Recommended Timeline and Checklist

Below is a chronological list of university and PBSI steps towards the doctoral degree. Please keep in mind that policies do change and, while we do our best to update this handbook regularly, updates to the handbook can lag behind the adoption of new university guidelines. Check with the AHGS and the Graduate and Professional School to ensure that all the steps described are up-to-date.

* Additional information about specific area requirements, such as required courses, are provided in specific training area documents.

Year 1 Steps

What to do	When/Deadline	Notes
TAI and Department TA Training	TAI training posts its dates ahead of the fall semester. The department TA training occurs in the PBSI first-year student seminar.	The AHGS will communicate the training dates (typically, the TAI occurs prior to the start of the academic term).
Clinical and I/O Students must submit an MDD petition to add a master's degree as a secondary degree. These forms are submitted through DPSS.	November 1	Approved by graduate staff advisor, AHGS, and the graduate and professional school
Complete PBSI 1st Year Graduate Student Seminar	During 1st semester	The AHGS will communicate meeting times and lead this seminar.
Clinical and I/O Students must form a Master's advisory committee and submit a Master's Degree Plan through DPSS.	March 1	Approved by graduate staff advisor (pre-committee), advisory committee, AHGS, and the graduate and professional school.
First year students. Complete first year research project	End of first program year.	Consult with primary advisor and adhere to training area guidelines.
Complete required course work.	---	Students must be enrolled in graduate courses full time during academic year. Consult area specific curriculum documents for required courses.

Year 2 Steps

Note. Steps to the MA degree for Clinical and I/O students are sketched out for completion in two years. This is not a hard department deadline - though it does reflect the optimal timeline to strive towards. Please consult your training area and primary advisor for details about the hard deadlines regarding completion of the MA.

What to do	When/Deadline	Notes
All 2nd Year Students must present their first year projects at the PBSI 2nd Year Student Research Celebration	The AHGS will announce the date of the research celebration several months prior to the event. It will typically be held early in the Fall semester.	Posters will be evaluated by the PBSI Graduate Studies committee. Top ranked presenters will receive monetary awards that can be used for research and research-related travel.
All 2nd Year Students must form a doctoral advisory committee and submit a doctoral degree plan through DPSS	End of Week 8 of the Fall semester (of second year)	Discuss this early with your primary advisor. Approved by graduate staff advisor (pre-committee), advisory committee, AHGS, and the graduate and professional school.
Clinical and I/O Students should identify and follow posted graduate school deadlines for successfully completing the Master's degree for a spring or summer graduation.	We recommend doing this early in the Fall semester; consult with your primary advisor and training area.	https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/dates-and-deadlines/dates-and-deadlines
Clinical and I/O Students check to make sure that the Master's degree plan and advisory committee are up-to-date and that course work is complete	Beginning of Spring Semester	The Graduate Staff Advisor can help with this.
Clinical and I/O Students can submit their thesis research proposal and approval form to the Graduate school.	No later than 20 days prior to submitting the announcement of final defense exam; last day to submit these is typically in early February.	Approved by AHGS, Research Compliance and Biosafety, and the Graduate School. https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms/research-proposal-approval-form
Clinical and I/O Students can apply for Master's graduation if they are able.	Typically mid-February deadline to avoid a late fee, but students should plan to do this at the start of the spring semester for a May graduation.	The Graduate Staff Advisor can help with this.
Clinical and I/O Students can submit the Request for Final Examination to the Graduate School	At least 10 days before the final exam (thesis defense) date; last day to submit is typically late February for a May graduation.	Approved by Advisory Committee and AHGS
Clinical and I/O Students can defend their thesis, submit the final defense report to the Graduate School, and upload a final copy of the thesis	Typically, the report is due in early March for a May graduation. Check the posted Graduate School Deadlines.	https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/dates-and-deadlines/dates-and-deadlines
All students should continue completing required course work.	------	Consult area specific curriculum documents for required courses.

Year 3 through Graduation

What to do	When/Deadline	Notes
Complete required course work detailed on the approved doctoral degree plan.	Prior to doctoral preliminary exam.	
Complete Preliminary Examination and Submit Checklist and the Report of the Preliminary Exam. [Preliminary exams are area specific; check with your advisor and/or training area curriculum document to determine what constitutes your preliminary exam]	The student should complete the Preliminary Examination no later than the end of the semester following the completion of the formal coursework on the degree plan. Results must be received by the Graduate School 10 working days after exam date.	Approved by the Advisory Committee, AHGS, and Graduate and Professional School
Submit research proposal for dissertation and the Research Proposal Approval Form to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies.	At least 20 working days prior to submission of the Request and Announcement of Final Examination.	Approved by the Advisory committee, AHGS, Research Compliance and Biosafety, Graduate and Professional School
Apply for a degree online at the Howdy portal; pay graduation fee.	During the first week of the final semester; pay graduation fee after graduate application is submitted; See The Graduate and Professional School calendar for deadlines.	Approved by the Graduate and Professional School
Submit Request and Announcement of Final Examination to hold and announce final examination.	Must be received by the Graduate and Professional School at least 10 working days before final exam date; see the Graduate and Professional School calendar for deadlines.	Approved by the Advisory committee, AHGS, Graduate and Professional School
Successfully complete the final examination and submit the report of final examination to the Graduate School.	The Report of the Final Examination form should be submitted to the Graduate and Professional School within 10 days following the exam by the department.	Approved by the Advisory committee, AHGS, and Graduate and Professional School
Upload one approved final copy of the dissertation as a single pdf file to etd.tamu.edu and submit the fully signed Dissertation/Record of Study Approval Form to the Graduate and Professional School.	See the Graduate and Professional School calendar for deadlines.	Approved by the Advisory committee, AHGS, and Graduate and Professional School

PBSI POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This section provides descriptions of policies and procedures that are central to graduate training in PBSI and commonly used to guide responses to issues that our students might face.

Advisor/Advisee Compacts

Near the beginning of each academic year (Fall semester), the advisor and the advisee will meet to discuss general expectations and plans for the year. The primary goal of this process is to increase communication between advisors and advisees regarding student development, progress, and training expectations. These should be documented in an Advisor/Advisee Compact Form that both the advisor and advisee have access to. The compact is not a contract. This means that as expectations, goals, and responsibilities change – so too can the compact form. The purpose of the compact form is to have a record of what has been communicated in the advisor/advisee relationship so that misunderstandings and ambiguity can be reduced. The compact process and document is required.

Student Evaluation Process

Regular Annual Evaluations. Each training area monitors student progress via a regular review process. The purpose of this process is to help students identify areas of strength and improve areas of weakness. We strongly encourage students to discuss the evaluation process with their faculty advisor and/or training area as early as

possible. All students will receive a formal summary evaluation document at least once per training year. The summary evaluation provides evaluative feedback and concrete developmental objectives. Specific expectations and evaluations will be tailored to each individual student's needs and training program. The evaluations should also be tied to agreements laid out in the advisor/advisee compact, which are also completed/updated annually. At minimum, students will be evaluated on central dimensions of their student and assistantship (employee) roles, including (but not limited to):

(a) Performance in courses
(b) Progress towards the degree in terms of milestones (e.g., first-year projects, preliminary examinations, etc.)
(c) Sustained research activity (e.g., research engagement, productivity, etc.)
(d) Career development
(e) Performance in graduate assistantship duties
(f) Performance in practicum training and professional internships (if applicable)
(g) Other topics articulated in the advisor/advisee compact and/or training area curriculum document

Targeted Evaluation Letters. Students may also receive targeted evaluation letters at any point in their training, as needed. These evaluations will typically be prompted by concerns that warrant immediate attention. The intent is to provide timely feedback on performance issues that, if left unaddressed, could lead to changes in program standing (including recommendations for dismissal). This process should not be prompted by relatively minor concerns (e.g., a single instance of not meeting a research expectation); it is meant to address significant emerging issues. These might include (but are not limited to):

(a) Consistent lack of engagement with research as expected per the department sustained research activity expectation, the working hours policy, objectives of research courses (e.g., PBSI 691), program-related research milestones (e.g., first year project, dissertation), and/or expected research activities specified in the annual Advisor/Advisee Compact
(b) Missing a degree milestone (e.g., first-year project, preliminary examination, etc.) deadline for the program and/or training area
(c) Patterns of poor performance, ongoing challenges, and/or lack of responsiveness to informal corrective feedback in a graduate assistantship role
(d) Poor performance in coursework (e.g., earning a "C" or lower in a course)
(e) Other topics articulated in the advisor/advisee compact and/or training area curriculum document

The letters should not be a surprise to the student. It is expected that the advisor and advisee will have already had informal discussions about the issue before the situation required a formal evaluation letter. Advisors should not file a letter without first discussing the issue with the student, and they should indicate in their letter that they have had this discussion.

Targeted evaluation letters must include a clear description of the problem/concern, a summary of any informal feedback provided to the student about the issue prior to the targeted evaluation letter, and a clear professional growth plan (e.g., complete the preliminary examination by a specific date) to address the deficiency. The letter will be sent to the student and the AHGS.

Students are, of course, entitled to contest all evaluations through standard processes in the department (e.g., a grievance procedure) and university (https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/policies-process/what-is-the-process-for-holding-a-graduate-academic-appeals-panel).

Dismissal from the Program. **Students cannot be dismissed from a laboratory or training program without cause. The evaluation process described above sets parameters for determining cause and governs decisions to dismiss based on scholastic deficiency. With only a few exceptions (see below), recommendations for dismissal cannot proceed unless a student has received a formal evaluation letter documenting a concrete plan for addressing an area of concern and has been given a reasonable opportunity to comply with that plan. Scholastic deficiency is established when a student fails to adequately adhere to the professional growth plan documented in an evaluation letter.**

This evaluation and dismissal process is grounded in University rules regarding scholastic deficiency for degree-seeking graduate students (Student Rule 12.3). Of note, this rule states that a degree-seeking graduate student is considered to be scholastically deficient if:

- Either the student's cumulative GPA or the GPA for courses listed on the degree plan falls below 3.00 or below a higher standard set by the program, department or college of affiliation; or
- The student fails to show acceptable proficiency in such other requisites for the degree as may be assigned by the graduate advisory committee, program, department or the Graduate and Professional School (e.g., qualifying and preliminary examinations, research, writing or a thesis or dissertation, etc.).

This is the typical process leading to a recommendation for dismissal from a PBSI program.

1. The advisor will provide informal feedback to the student that they are not showing acceptable proficiency in requisites for the degree (e.g., research requirements, course work, degree milestones, etc.) and provide plans for improvement.
2. If the informal feedback does not lead to a positive change, the advisor will provide an evaluation letter documenting the concern(s), with specific plans for growth and improvement in the areas identified, to the student and the AHGS. The letter should come in the form of a formal memo on university letterhead and indicate that informal feedback has been provided to the student (preferably with documentation of that feedback).
3. The AHGS and/or DH will meet with the student to discuss the situation, explain the program implications of the letter, and provide information about department and university procedures/resources.
4. The advisor and training area will monitor student progress in the program and evaluate whether the student has remediated as required by the specified date laid out in the evaluation letter.
5. An evaluation letter reporting whether the student has addressed the professional growth plan will be sent to the student and the AHGS after the student has had a reasonable opportunity to address the concern.
    a. Successfully addressing the professional growth plan will keep the student in good standing in the program.
    b. Failure to fulfill the requirements laid out in the professional growth plan will place the student in poor standing (i.e., the student is scholastically deficient) and could lead to a loss of funding and/or a recommendation for dismissal from the program (See Student Rule 12.5). Funding decisions are determined by the DH.

The following can be grounds for a recommendation of dismissal upon first offense in accordance with multiple university rules (e.g., Aggie Honor System Office).

1. Academic Misconduct (https://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/rules-and-procedures/rules/honor-system-rules/#Definitions), including rules set forth per Student Rule 20 and claiming A.I. generated content as one's own. A.I. use must follow the guidelines of the American Psychological Association (https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/resources/publishing-tips/policy-generative-ai)
2. Violations of professional ethics codes (e.g., violation of FERPA law; engaging in research without necessary institutional approvals; violation of clinical ethics codes in practice).
3. Falling below a 3.0 cumulative GPA at any point after the 1st program year.
4. Title IX violations and/or harassment.

Recommendations for dismissal will sent by the advisor to the AHGS and the DH. The DH, in consultation with the AHGS, will review the recommendation, along with the student's record, and subsequently schedule a meeting with the advisor and student to discuss the situation. Decisions to dismiss will initiate standard graduate school processes for dismissal. Students will have access to all the resources they need to navigate that process, including standard university appeals processes (https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/policies-process/what-is-the-process-for-holding-a-graduate-academic-appeals-panel).

**In addition, a student can petition to remain in the program under a different primary advisor if that advisor agrees to serve in that role. A clear case for how such a change will facilitate student progress and how the student will address their scholastic deficiency must be part of this petition. All petitions of this sort will be reviewed by the DH.

Changing Advisors and/or Training Areas While in Good Standing.

Students in our programs work under a primary advisor in an apprenticeship model. Faculty advisors make decisions about who they will advise, which in most cases occurs at admissions (i.e., students are selected to the department based on an expectation of a match between student and faculty member(s)). Sometimes, throughout the course of training, it can become clear that the student-advisor fit is poor or that a student's goals no longer align with the training opportunities that a particular lab/advisor can provide. These are not situations in which performance/standing is a concern, and may merely reflect an incompatibility between a student's goals and the opportunities afforded in their primary training environment. In these situations, students and advisors are expected to discuss viable options for addressing the mismatch. Students are, for example, able to explore the possibility of switching to another primary advisor[1]. The possibility of such a switch is dependent on another faculty advisor agreeing to serve in that role. If an advisor switch is feasible, the switch should occur between academic semesters and the current advisor should be given advance notice that a switch is imminent so that they can plan accordingly. If no alternative primary advisor emerges, the student will need to continue training under their current advisor and fulfilling program requirements in that laboratory[2]. The student should consult with the AHGS and/or DH about navigating these situations.

Working Hours Policy

Graduate students must balance their many demands and responsibilities. These can include, but are not limited to, the following expectations within the university: GAR/GAT assignment, classes, clinical work, thesis/dissertation research, service to the program/department/field. Students are balancing these many demands and responsibilities with those they experience in their home life. This document reflects both the realities and regulations of the responsibilities that students have, as well as their inherent human needs for rest, recovery, and connection.

The Working Hours policy document spells out the number of hours of lab work that can be required of a student, according to their position (e.g., as a GAR) and enrollment in a research course (i.e., 691). The departmental

[1] Switching advisors will not affect a student's access to assistantship funding if they are currently in good standing in the program, although the nature of the funding might change (e.g., GAR to GAT). It may also be the case that an advisor change introduces a need to switch to a different training area. The AHGS will facilitate this sort of transition, as it may require a formal "Change of Major" application and updates to degree plans on file with the Graduate School. Any change in training area will also require a vote of admission from all faculty in the new training area. Students not in good standing (e.g., those in probationary status) in their current training area will not be considered for transfer to another concentration, except in rare circumstances handled by the Department Head in consultation with the affected programs, student, and advisor.

[2] Note that this process only pertains to situations of poor professional fit between advisors/advisees. It does not pertain to situations that involve grievance procedures.

requirement for sustained research activity (described above) is a programmatic requirement that overlaps to some degree, but not completely, with the Working Hours policy. In other words, to make progress toward the doctoral degree, sustained research activity is expected, regardless of the maximum number of lab work/research hours that can be required of a student as stipulated by the Working Hours policy. As an example, a clinical first-year student may not be enrolled in any research courses (because of heavy curriculum demands on their time/schedule) and might be funded as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. In this scenario, the Working Hours policy would indicate that no research hours would be required of the student. Nonetheless, as part of their doctoral training, the student would still be expected to show evidence of a reasonable amount of sustained research activity in the first year of the program (as would be expected of the sustained research activity *and* first year research project requirements).

It is important to recognize that a mentor-mentee relationship works best when students and faculty are 'on the same team'. Good communication is essential. Therefore, while this document lays out a general working hours policy for graduate students, it does so for the purpose of setting reasonable standards and *enhancing* clarity and communication between the advisor and the mentee. **This document is meant to help facilitate, not replace, communication between the advisor and the mentee.** While it is up to the faculty member to set the parameters of the working arrangement, it is the responsibility of the student to ask questions and seek clarification when needed. In the case that it appears that a student is being *required* to work more hours than outlined below, the student should bring this to the attention of their advisor. Both parties should give each other the benefit of the doubt, rather than immediately assume that there has been a deliberate attempt to go outside of the working hours policy. In the case that the situation cannot be resolved between mentor and mentee, other procedures to help facilitate communication and resolve the issue are available.

It is also important to keep in mind that different rules at the university are related to different roles of the student as a student and as an employee (e.g., student rules for academic work, employee rules for employment work). Note that this is complicated because it is often difficult for students, faculty, and staff to differentiate between the two (e.g., a student is a GAR on a project that is also going to be used in their dissertation). An obvious complication is that working time is not the same as meeting goals. Simply putting in hours does not guarantee the completion of all degree objectives or directly translate into the mastery of the skills emphasized in our training programs. Standing in the program is determined by a students' completion of required work expectations in their assigned roles *and* their successful completion of academic program requirements. It is both the quantity and quality of the work that matters.

Additionally, both faculty and students should recognize that students have agency in choosing to work beyond the hours required. Just as faculty often spend more time in their teaching, research, or service roles as defined by their appointments, so too can students devote more time to research, teaching, and service in pursuit of their career goals. **Building a competitive research portfolio typically requires a level of effort above and beyond the minimum.** It is this point that makes any sort of working hour policy tenuous. On the one hand, there are maximum hours that faculty can require students to work in their assigned positions. On the other hand, the job market is competitive and faculty also want to provide opportunities (e.g., additional research opportunities, potential publications, etc.) for career development that introduce additional demands on a student's time. Faculty present these opportunities to students in the spirit of helping them develop research skills and build records that will make them competitive for high level research careers. In many cases, the amount of effort involved in these opportunities will exceed minimum time commitments required of students' assignments. Students make their own choices about the potential benefits that these additional effort expenditures will have for their career prospects, but should recognize that minimum effort will be unlikely to produce especially attractive career outcomes. **These guidelines therefore do not set caps on what students are allowed to do, nor what opportunities faculty can provide and students can seize. Rather, the guidelines put concrete limits on what students can be *required* to do to fulfill their assistantship or research course objectives.**

I. Guidelines for Work Time Requirements

(1) Contact time for assistantship work and research courses are required to be fulfilled as averaged over a reasonable time period. A reasonable time period could be two weeks, three weeks, or one month. The goal is to allow flexibility for students and research lab needs while also ensuring that work is completed. **It is the responsibility of the faculty member overseeing the student work to clearly establish standards for what is considered a reasonable time period, and to communicate this to the student.**

(2) Employment assignments (e.g., GAR or GAT) are made with an explicit statement of the expected working hours per week. Three common arrangements are: 20-hour GAR, 20-hour GAT, and 10-hour GAT + 10-hour GAR. **Faculty cannot require students to exceed the expected weekly working hours as averaged over their established reasonable time period. This cap is an official university policy.**

   (a) Acceptable Example: The student is assigned to a 20-hour GAT. In weeks when papers are due (e.g., 5 times in a semester, so about every third week), the student works 30 GAT hours per week and in the other weeks the student works about 15 GAT hours per week. This averages out to about 20-hours per week over the course of the assignment.

   (b) Acceptable Example: The student is assigned to a 20-hour GAR. The student and faculty look at the participant schedule for the month and realize that two weeks are incredibly busy and two weeks are not. The student might work on the GAR for 30 hours for two weeks and 10 hours for two weeks. This averages out to 20-hours per week across that time period.

   (c) Unacceptable Example: The student is assigned to a 20-hour GAR. The faculty *requires* the student to devote 20 GAR hours per week running experimental sessions and additional hours writing manuscripts for publication. In this scenario, the *required* working time exceeds the 20-hour cap on required work for the GAR.

(3) Research and Thesis courses (e.g., 685, 691) require a minimum of 3 hours per week per credit, averaged across a reasonable time period. Time devoted to thesis/dissertation work, when relevant, is prioritized in these hours. This is an established minimum amount of work per credit hour in our department. However, it's important to recognize that some students may need to work more hours to complete their goals in the research/thesis course. Working the minimum hours does not guarantee successful completion of goals and/or program objectives (e.g., dissertation). The exact amount of work time in these courses thus varies depending on a student's goals, but ordinarily should not fall outside the limits of 3-5 hours per week per credit hour.

(4) Writing time is part of research time, both for course credit as part of PBSI 685/691 and/or as part of the required work in a GAR position. Of course, writing is critically important for students who wish to build a strong record of scholarship and exceeding the minimum working time requirements might be necessary to complete a sufficient number of manuscripts to be competitive on the post-doc/job market.

II. Guidelines for Time Off

(1) No one should be required to work every single day, and time away from the university setting should not be based on when someone can fit it in. Time away should be predictable to a large extent. In many circumstances, the usual working hours will reflect the university's usual working hours (i.e., M-F 8-5 pm). However, this might not be possible in all situations. For example, some laboratories require data collection to occur in the evening and/or on the weekends, and some classes might meet after 5 PM. **Faculty supervising students in assistantships and/or in research courses must provide students with a general expectation for regular working hours that includes predictable days away from the university and aligns with the required work time guidelines described above. Regular working hours will be determined by the needs of the lab, as identified by the faculty supervising the student.**

(2) Faculty should establish processes for students to take time away from their work responsibilities for illness, appointments, and other infrequent events that require time away from work. This process should be communicated to students explicitly and can include plans for making up missed time when appropriate/possible.
(3) Faculty should not require students to respond to emails/calls/texts outside of established working hours. Students should not expect faculty to respond to emails/calls/texts outside of established working hours. There are, of course, exceptions to this general guideline. Emergency situations (e.g., power outages, illness) may require immediate attention/response. Students and faculty should together establish how to communicate emergency situations. Furthermore, some forms of communication (like email) are "passive." Communicating via these means does not imply immediate response and should not be taken as an intrusion into out-of-work hours.
(4) Students should be able to take time away from their work responsibilities (e.g., to visit family out of state). Note that, like faculty, much of this time should be taken during intersessions (e.g., the period after December finals and before Spring semester). Time off across multiple days should be infrequent during active academic semesters, rarely exceeding 1 instance per academic semester for non-professional travel. Summers may provide more flexible arrangements, but it is ultimately up to the faculty to set expectations regarding time away from work for non-professional activities. It is also reasonable for faculty to expect that some working hours missed will be made up later.

Leaves of Absence

Students who have personal difficulties that prevent them from participating in the program for a given period of time may request a leave of absence. In most cases, a leave of absence is granted for no more than one year. To obtain a leave of absence, the student must write a letter of petition to their training area head. Upon approval of the area, the request is forwarded to the AHGS and DH, and then to the Graduate School. **Leaves of absence can lead to termination from the university as an employee because the student will no longer be working in an assistantship. There are implications for employee benefits (e.g., student insurance).** Students exploring a leave of absence should consult with their advisors and the AHGS so that they are aware of these implications.

Grievance Procedures

All members of the University community are expected to observe high standards of professional conduct and ethical behavior in education and in the supervision of student research and teaching. In a large heterogeneous scholarly community, however, problems may arise. Below are two resolution approaches. Students can consult with their advisors, their area heads, the AHGS, other faculty, and the DH within the department when thinking about the need for a grievance. **In all circumstances, the department will protect the student from any form of retaliation for voicing concerns or initiating a grievance.**

Informal Grievance Procedures: The department strongly encourages all students who believe they have a grievance to pursue informal resolution before initiating a formal grievance. If deemed reasonable by the grievant, a student in Psychological and Brain Sciences is encouraged to discuss the issue with the faculty or staff member with whom the problem has arisen. If a satisfactory solution is not forthcoming or if a discussion with the other party is not reasonable given the situation, the student should use all appropriate avenues, including, but not limited to, discussing the issue with his or her advisor, his or her Area Director, the graduate student representatives to the areas, the AHGS, the Associate Head, or Head of the department, who shall attempt to find a resolution acceptable to all parties. The student may also consult with Graduate Studies, Undergraduate Studies, the International Affairs Center, or other sources.

Formal Grievance Procedures: Students can initiate formal grievances and appeals through the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. This should typically start by consulting with the Graduate School Ombuds Officer (https://grad.tamu.edu/academics/academic-success-resources/conflict-resolution). The Ombuds Officer for Graduate Education (https://grad.tamu.edu/academics/academic-success-resources/conflict-resolution/ombuds-services) represents a valuable resource for questions regarding grievances and appeals. The ombudsperson advocates for the processes of graduate education and provides equal, open access to all parties - students, faculty, staff, and administrators. The range of issues that can be brought to the attention of ombudspersons is not limited to sexual harassment. They can be approached with any complaint and concern ranging from issues related to actions taken by the Chair, through students concerns about their relations with their faculty mentors. Issues of academic integrity and ethics can also be discussed with the ombuds officers before they become formal complaints.

Professional Conduct Policies

- APA Code of Conduct
- Texas A&M University Policies
- Texas A&M Student Rules

Title IX and Harassment

https://law.tamu.edu/current-students/student-affairs/title-ix

Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and activities at federally funded institutions. Title IX protects students, faculty, staff, and visitors to our campus from all forms of sex discrimination.

Sexual harassment, including sexual violence, is a form of sex discrimination and is prohibited under Title IX. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, and nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when this conduct is so severe, persistent or pervasive that it affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work or educational performance, or creates an intimidating or hostile work or educational environment.

The Department Psychological and Brain Sciences will not tolerate sexual harassment by any person associated with the department directed at any member of our community, be it faculty, students, or staff members. Formal complaints alleging sexual harassment will be investigated and adjudicated through the disciplinary mechanisms provided by the department and the university.

In addition, as psychologists, we are expected to understand and appreciate diversity and individual differences. Indeed, this is one of the criteria that are considered in accreditation of doctoral programs in clinical psychology and part of the ethics code of the American Psychological Association. Therefore, the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences will not tolerate harassment of or discrimination against any individual because of their age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, language, or socioeconomic status by any person who is acting in a role assigned by the department.

Dual Roles and Consensual Relationships

A dual role is a conflict of interest that exists when people simultaneously are involved in a personal or romantic relationship and also a professional relationship in which one party directly or indirectly supervises, directs, or evaluates the professional and/or educational activities of the other. The APA code of ethics specifically prohibits these "multiple relationships" (https://www.apa.org/ethics/code).

Texas A&M University prohibits certain kinds of consensual amorous, romantic, and/or sexual relationships. The

prohibition below is relevant to graduate students in all assistantship positions (employees).

> A system university employee is prohibited from pursuing or having a consensual relationship with an undergraduate student at that institution. A consensual relationship in violation of this section may result in disciplinary action against the member employee, up to and including dismissal. An employee may request an exemption from the prohibition set forth in this section from the president or designee of the member for whom the employee works. Exemptions may be granted only in exceptional circumstances. Documentation of an exemption will be signed by the president or designee and placed in the employee's personnel file.

In addition,

> Unless alternative arrangements are approved under Sections 4.1 and 4.2, a consensual relationship is prohibited between a member employee and another individual (graduate student, staff, faculty, or third party) who is under the employee's authority or supervision. An individual is under an employee's "authority or supervision" if the employee has one of the following: authority over any term or condition of the other individual's employment or academic status; job duties making the employee directly or indirectly responsible for the other individual's hiring, supervising, evaluating, teaching, coaching, grading, advising, mentoring, or providing benefits to or obtaining benefits from the other individual, including employment. This prohibition applies whether the other individual is an employee, student or third party.
>
> 4.1 For a consensual relationship covered by this section, the employee with the hiring, supervisory, evaluative, teaching, coaching, grading or advisory responsibilities, or the employee providing benefits to or obtaining benefits from the third party, must promptly notify their immediate supervisor of the relationship and engage in a discussion of alternative arrangements for hiring, supervising, evaluating, teaching, coaching, grading, advising, mentoring, or providing benefits to or obtaining benefits from the other individual. An employee's failure to promptly self-report a consensual relationship under this section or a consensual relationship under this section that is not remedied through approved alternative arrangements may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
>
> 4.2 Documentation of the alternative arrangements will be signed by each affected employee and placed in their personnel file. The individual's immediate supervisor must ensure that the issue is promptly reported in writing to the member chief executive officer. The member retains the right to determine if alternative arrangements are possible and, if so, which arrangement(s) is selected.

GRADUATE STUDENT FUNDING

Educational expenses for nine months will vary according to your personal needs and course of study. Scholarships & Financial Aid provides an estimated budget for new graduate students (including tuition and fees, books, supplies, transportation, room and board, incidental and living expenses). The latest cost of attendance estimates can be found here.

Students in our program are funded through a variety of different mechanisms, ranging from internal fellowships (e.g., College Merit Fellowships) to external fellowships (e.g., NSF graduate fellowships) to teaching and research assistantships.

Graduate Assistantships

The majority of our students will be employed as a Graduate Assistant. These positions provide the stipend and

tuition/fees waivers that are central to graduate student funding. Initial offer letters to graduate students contain information about the financial support from the department, including the type of support and the number of years the support is available. After the first year, all students will receive letters indicating the type of assistantship they are being offered for subsequent semester funding. These letters will come from the Graduate Staff Advisor. Decisions about which assistantships are offered are determined by funding availability, departmental need, student/faculty preference, and performance history. The DH and the Associate Head make the final decisions regarding student funding mechanisms.

Graduate students holding assistantships must be registered for a minimum of nine credit hours during a fall or spring semester, or for six credit hours during the summer. Assistantships terminate upon failure to maintain the minimum enrollment requirement. Students serving in these roles are eligible for insurance benefits and cover tuition and fees at the in-state rate. Graduate Assistants cannot be employed greater than 20 hours per week (50% FTE) by anyone without approval from the PBSI DH, the student's advisory committee chair, and the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. **The work required in any assistantship should never exceed 20 hours per week on average.**

If the University pays you, you are an employee of the State of Texas. You are bound by state law and university business and ethics policies. All state employees are required to complete Human Resources trainings. A listing of required training courses can be found in the TrainTraq portal here.

Should any problems or difficulties arise in carrying out an assistantship, the student should consult with his or her assistantship supervisor (e.g. course instructor, research supervisor, etc.). Acceptance of an assistantship implies a professional commitment, and assistantship duties must be carried out regardless of demands of coursework and other educational or personal responsibilities. Should a problem arise such that the student is unable to complete these duties, he or she should notify his or her advisor and the Graduate Advisor as quickly as possible, and then should make every effort to continue in that assistantship until a replacement can be arranged. **In these ways, the assistantship is like all other types of employment that involve pay, benefits, etc.**

Common Graduate Assistantship Policies

- Graduate Assistants are employees of the State of Texas bound by state law and University Employee policies.
- Graduate Assistants must be enrolled full time in courses to work in an assistantship.
- All state employees are required to complete Human Resources trainings. A list of required training courses can always be found in the TrainTraq portal here.
- Vacations consist of university holidays, not academic breaks. This means that students may have to perform job duties on days when the university is open, but classes are not in session (e.g. reading days which typically occur around holidays and exams). You should check the university academic calendar for official university holidays.

Graduate Assistant Teaching (GAT)

Teaching Assistantships in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences take different forms. Some GATs involve assisting a professor in a course that they teach; some GATs involve teaching a laboratory section of an undergraduate course (e.g., PBSI 301 and/or PBSI 302); some GATs involve teaching an actual course. The GAT funds a student's stipend, their tuition and fees up to 9 credit hours per semester (6 hours in summer), and their employee benefits (e.g., health insurance costs).

Graduate Assistant Research (GAR)

Research Assistants are paid to complete research under a specific Principle Investigator (PI). The PI typically is the student's faculty advisor, but may be another faculty member. Research assistantships typically involve assisting a

faculty member with their research. The PI, in this case, has secured funding for the graduate student to be involved in the research and the graduate student is employed to be an assistant on the project(s). The GAR funds a student's stipend, their tuition and fees up to 9 credit hours per semester (6 hours in summer), and their employee benefits (e.g., health insurance costs).

Graduate Assistant Non-Teaching (GANT)

Non-Teaching Assistants typically work 20 hours per week completing various non-teaching duties within the department. This designation is rare in PBSI, but funds a student's stipend, their tuition and fees up to 9 credit hours per semester (6 hours in summer), and their employee benefits (e.g., health insurance costs).

Payroll

Processing payroll paperwork takes time, especially at the beginning of a semester when hundreds of new employees are being added. Your new employee paperwork must be processed by the deadlines that our business office provides each semester. Like all TAMU employees, Graduate Assistants are paid for work already performed. Students with a nine-month appointment that starts on 9/1 will therefore receive their first paycheck for that appointment at the beginning of October. The business office HR coordinator can always provide details about when students will be paid.

Health Insurance

All students holding graduate assistantships will be eligible for health insurance beginning 60-days after employment. The university will cover a portion of the monthly premium, with the employee being responsible for the remaining amount. Students who begin receiving health insurance before the 60-day waiting period will be responsible for the entire monthly premium until the waiting period ends. The business office HR coordinator can provide details and information about all things related to student health insurance. Please remember, though, that graduate student health insurance coverage is connected to employment as a graduate assistant.

Other Funding Opportunities

We encourage students to explore other funding opportunities that they might be eligible for. In particular both NSF and NIH offer competitive and prestigious predoctoral fellowships that fund students during graduate training. The process of applying for these can be an incredibly valuable training experience that looks particularly attractive on the CV. All students should discuss these mechanisms with their primary advisor and/or faculty in the department.

The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies also maintains a detailed list of TAMU and external funding opportunities for new and current graduate students including information on fellowships, scholarships, financial aid, and awards. Texas A&M University administers several loan funds for students who need financial assistance. Students must meet the eligibility requirements of the various programs, be in good standing with the University, and be making satisfactory academic progress. Holding a fellowship or assistantship does not necessarily disqualify one from obtaining an educational loan. Changing fellowships or assistantships, however, may affect the terms of existing loans. It is the responsibility of the student to work with the Financial Aid Office in these circumstances. Information concerning student financial aid programs may be found here.

Graduate Student Travel and Research Support Funds

There are a number of support mechanisms for graduate student research and travel. Listed below are sources of financial support for which you may apply. If you are eligible, it is strongly recommended that you apply well before the cut-off date so that you will be eligible for available funding. The funds that support these mechanisms often

come from finite pools. Funding opportunities will be announced throughout the year via emails posted through Graduate Student Listserv.

PBSI Graduate Student Travel Awards

The PBSI Graduate Student Travel Fund was developed to assist students in the dissemination of their work at professional conferences. Students who are in good standing in a PBSI PhD program may apply. To be eligible, students must be scheduled to be a presenter (e.g., talk, a poster) at a National or International conference in their academic area. Funds are not available for local or regional meetings, but are available for virtual conferences. The amount of funding that a student can receive is determined by several factors, including scholarly productivity and accomplishment. Possible funding amounts are spelled out clearly each year in the annual application form. The AHGS will email students the form at the beginning of each fiscal year (~September). Students can apply for these funds once each fiscal year that they are in the program.

PBSI Professional Development Awards

The Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences receives funds from the College of Liberal Arts to support strategic programs for graduate students. The bulk of these funds are used to support professional development opportunities for students. These can include, but are not limited to, attending short courses during the summer or between long semesters at another institution (e.g., ICPSR Summer Methods Program), intensive language courses to develop research skills, and other similar activities. Dissertation related research travel and travel to conferences to present papers cannot be supported with these funds. Possible funding amounts are spelled out clearly each year in the annual application form. The AHGS will email students the form at the beginning of each fiscal year (~September). Students can apply for these funds once each fiscal year that they are in the program.

The Graduate and Professional School Research and Presentation Travel Award

The Graduate and Professional School's Graduate Student Research and Presentation (RAP) Travel Award supports educational and professional development opportunities for graduate students. The program currently reimburses students up to $750 for travel expenses associated with academic conferences and research projects in the United States and abroad. Information about this opportunity can be found here.

The Graduate and Professional School Dissertation Fellowship

The Texas A&M University Graduate and Professional School frequently offers a Dissertation Fellowship to support students in the dissertation phase of their degree program. This fellowship is intended to support doctoral students in the final analysis of the research topic and the final writing of the dissertation. This fellowship is NOT intended to finance data collection or the completion of doctoral coursework. Priority goes to doctoral students whose primary financial support is NOT related to their research (e.g. GANT, GAL, GAT, Self-funded). Students who have funding related to their dissertation research will be least likely to receive this fellowship. Information about this award can be found here.

GRADUATE STUDENT TEACHING

Teaching experience is not a departmental requirement. However, we strongly recommend teaching experience for students planning academic careers. There several experiences available.

Teaching Assistantship Training

All students in our program are required to complete the Teaching Assistant Institute (TAI) hosted by the Center for Teaching Excellence at Texas A&M University and a department specific training hosted by PBSI. We require all students to complete these programs at the beginning of their first semester in the program, regardless of whether or not they are currently assigned to a GAT position. The AHGS will provide details to incoming students about both of these requirements.

Graduate Instructor of Record Training

PBSI offers a "Teaching of Psychology" training sequence for graduate students who are seeking opportunities to be an "instructor of record" for an undergraduate psychology course. The sequence consists of two courses.

PBSI 696 is a seminar that provides pedagogical training for graduate students. In this course, students learn how to use active learning, written assignments, technology, and real-world applications in their classes. Additionally, they hear from external speakers from across the campus, highlighting the wealth of resources, skills, and methodologies that are available. Students also complete classroom observations and micro-teaching demonstrations to further develop and reflect on their developing teaching style. Importantly, this course helps graduate students develop their own teacher toolkit that they can use throughout their career, regardless of what course they are teaching.

PBSI 697 is a course tailored to students concurrently teaching an Introduction to Psychology course. Essentially, this is a mentoring course in which students develop skills and materials needed to teach a high-impact interactive class that also satisfies the CORE curriculum requirements. This course is focused entirely on providing and helping students develop the materials for their introductory course, including things like: writing a syllabus, developing lectures, in-class activities (active learning, clips, in-class experiments, etc.), creating exam materials, and satisfying the core curriculum requirements for the course. It is a place to get support, mentoring and clarification as students teach their own course.

GRADUATE STUDENT RESOURCES

Mental Health Resources

Taking care of oneself is critical to being successful in graduate school. We encourage students to pay attention to their well-being and we are here to assist in whatever we can. The Graduate and Professional School has a licensed counselor who specializes in graduate and professional student issues. Information about this resource and other Graduate School support services can be found here.

Library Resources

Evans Library. The main university library has several features that are important to graduate students.

- A specific subject expert who can help students find resources central to psychology and provide introductions to key library resources/features.
- Library guides that provide information about critical research processes (e.g., writing, systematic literature reviews, etc.)
- Searchable Databases that are critical to psychological science scholarship (e.g., PSYCINFO).
- Get It For Me: Request books, articles, theses, dissertations, and other materials for free from the Texas A&M University Libraries or other libraries in the world.

Helen F. and Saul B. Sells Psychology Resource Collection. The personal library of S. B. and Helen Sells was donated to the Texas A&M Psychological and Brain Sciences Department. Dr. Sells finished his Ph.D. at Columbia University in 1936 under the direction of Robert S. Woodworth, and he had classes and research training from other well-known

psychologists such as Clark Hull, E.L. Thorndike, and Gardner Murphy. Dr. Sells' interest in seeing his library being put to good use was a primary reason for his selecting Texas A&M as the recipient of his personal collection. The Sells Resource Collection is open to PBSI faculty and graduate students. Books can be checked out by contacting the Department Administrative Assistant (Jen Fraustro).

Medical Sciences Library. Located on West Campus, the Medical Sciences Library is home to several hundred thousand volumes of Medical Journals related to the medical-science profession. From on-line book retrieval to storehouses of information from around the globe, this library has it all.

West Campus Library. Located on West campus, this library primarily serves the College of Business Administration and Graduate School of Business and departments within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. It has a limited, specialized collection of 600 periodicals, reference works, and current monographs in business and agriculture. The library has reading space for 1,000. The focus of the West Campus Library is the R.C. Barclay Reference and Retailing Resource Center. The Barclay Center offers a variety of electronic resources, including compact disk databases, online databases, and access to the Internet, to serve the needs of business and agriculture.

University Writing Center

The University Writing Center offers graduate students assistance with writing and public speaking, including class assignments, CVs, journal articles, research posters, oral presentations, theses or dissertations, and the oral defense. Please refer to their website for more details.

Computers and Printing

The Texas A&M University Open-Access Computer Labs are available for faculty and students of the University. Seven Open-Access Labs and one dedicated Printing Center provide access to email accounts as well as Web navigation, image-manipulation, desktop publishing, spreadsheet applications, computer-to-computer communications software, programming languages, and a number of course-specific programs. Lab access is 24 hours per day in the Student Computing Center (SCC) in order to better serve the needs of the students and faculty. Equipment varies from lab to lab, but most include Pentium – Based IBM compatible PCs, Apple Macintosh systems, Sun SPARC stations, SGI workstations (which provide access to the campus Supercomputers), optical scanners and a variety of high capacity printers. Color & Transparency printing is also available through the SCC, though this requires special access.

The Open Labs website information about printing at shared kiosks, including the kiosk in the Psychology Building.

Graduate Transportation and Parking

TAMU operates numerous bus routes to transport students from off-campus locations to campus. There are also numerous parking complexes available to students on campus. Details about both can be found on the transportation services website (https://transport.tamu.edu/default.aspx).

Appendix.

PBSI Advisor/Advisee Compact Form

PBSI requires that all advisors and advisees meet annually to discuss expectations, goals, student developmental trajectories, and general processes that guide their unique professional relationship. The following are a list of topics that could be discussed. It is recommended that the student and faculty document in writing, even briefly, the agreements that were reached. Topics that are not viewed as relevant by both parties can be omitted, and relevant topics that are not listed can be added in the optional spaces at the end of the document. The compacts are not meant to be static. They can be updated as frequently as needed, but it is likely that expectations/processes for many topics will remain the same throughout a student's time in the program (e.g., authorship policies). Regardless, the compacts should reflect current expectations, goals, etc. in the relationship/training environment.

1. **Frequency and Methods of Communication between Supervising Faculty and Student**

How often will student and mentor meet? How much time does the supervising faculty need to review research (e.g., abstracts, manuscripts, thesis documents, etc.) or career (e.g., CVs, grant applications, etc.) related materials? How should updates or changes in expectations and issues be communicated?

2. **Research and Training of the Student**

What are the expectations for meeting the sustained research activity program requirement (expectations should be reasonable in relation to other demands on students' time commitments (e.g., clinical training, coursework, etc.)? What are the students' career goals? Are there specific people who will oversee training other than the supervising faculty and to what degree will the student assist with other projects in the lab or working group? To what degree are students encouraged (or discouraged) from engaging in projects in other labs or working groups?

3. **Professional Development**

What constitutes professional development? What activities should students plan to engage in to enhance the quality of their graduate education?

4. **Common Laboratory or Working Group Responsibilities**

Which tasks and duties are shared among all lab or working group members, including the student?

5. **Notebooks, Data, Media**

What is the policy of the laboratory or working group related to the storage and sharing of data, notebooks, media, or other information relevant to ongoing or completed projects?

6. **Work Hours/Attendance on Site**

How many hours per week is the student expected to work on projects in collaboration with the students supervising faculty? How many hours per week is the student expected to work at an onsite location, such as laboratory, studio, or clinic?

7. **Authorship and Contributor Policies**

What is the policy that constitutes authorship on a project on which the student contributed? How is the order of authors determined in a manuscript or abstract? In what other ways, besides authorship, might the student's contribution be acknowledged?

8. **Manuscripts or other scholarly/creative works expected for Graduation and Career Goals**

Are there specific expectations for the number of manuscripts or other works (published, submitted and/or in preparation), and the student's authorship position on these manuscripts or other works, required for the student to graduate? Are there specific expectations or goals for the number of manuscripts (etc.) needed to attain student's career goals?

9. **Intellectual Policy and Copyright Issues: Disclosure, Patent Rights and Publishing Research Discoveries**

What is the policy for claims on intellectual property and patents that come out of the student's work? How is the outlet or vehicle for publication of the student's work decided?

10. **Selection of a Thesis/Dissertation Committee**

What is the process for determining the subject of the thesis/dissertation and the composition of the thesis/dissertation committee?

11. **Attendance of Professional Meetings**

Under which conditions can or should a student travel to a Regional, National, or International meetings? For example, only if the student is presenting? Who covers the cost and what will be covered?

12. **Career Development / Job Search and Placement**

What is the career choice of the student? What arrangements can be made to allow the student to participate in courses, workshops, etc. for their particular interests without compromising their research or scholarly training? What is the process in the student's field for job search and placement?

13. **Time off for Illness, University Holidays, and Vacation.**

What is the policy for vacations, holidays, and personal days?

14. **Funding and Financial Support**

Is the student financially supported and by what mechanism (e.g., GAR, GAT, GANT)? Will the student be provided with resources to complete research or scholarly work?

15. **Graduate Training Milestones**

What are the milestones that the student should plan to reach this academic year? How will these milestones be met?

16. **Conflict Resolution and Student Complaint Policies**

How will conflicts be resolved and what processes are preferred? Student-supervisor discussions or discussions that include other parties (e.g., committee members, department graduate advisor, DH). Use of university ombuds services?.

17. **For Clinical Area Only**: **Licensure and clinical hours.**

How will the student take the necessary classes needed for licensure/discipline specific knowledge requirements? How will the student meet minimum hour requirements for combined intervention/assessment? What are the student's desired patient population and treatment modalities - See response to career development to help guide this conversation.

18**. Internship.**

Is the student planning to take an internship now or in the future? What steps need to be taken to meet requirements for internship? How will you work together to support progress toward degree while working on the internship? What are the student's career goals and how do they align with an internship?

19. **Additional Topics not listed here.**