

# SECTION 1: ADMITTED STUDENTS

After admission, **BEFORE BEGINNING** the first semester, students should have a complete admission file, have passed an undergraduate statistics course, and joined in the Environmental Psychology Area's Orientation Day.

## Completing an Admission File

Prior to registration, a student's file at the admission office must contain:

- 1) A completed Graduate Center "Application for Admission."
- 2) Two or more letters of recommendation.
- 3) GRE scores. (A "Subject Area" test is not required.)
- 4) Official transcripts from all schools attended.
- 5) A completed "Application for Financial Assistance," for those seeking aid.
- 6) TOEFL scores for international students.

## Statistics Prerequisite

Students who enter the program must have passed an undergraduate statistics course within the past five years with a grade of "B" or better. Students should contact the Environmental Psychology Area Chair, listed in the Environmental Psychology Website, with questions about the applicability of statistics courses or for help in finding an appropriate course to take.

## Ethics

All program members are expected to act ethically. Sources of ethical standards include the Graduate Center Student Handbook, the Graduate Center Bulletin, the American Association of University Professors, the American Psychological Association, and the Institutional Review Board of the Graduate Center. See **The Graduate Center's "Avoiding and Detecting Plagiarism: A Guide for Graduate Students and Faculty."** [http://www.gc.cuny.edu/CUNY\\_GC/media/CUNY-Graduate-Center/PDF/Policies/General/AvoidingPlagiarism.pdf?ext=.pdf](http://www.gc.cuny.edu/CUNY_GC/media/CUNY-Graduate-Center/PDF/Policies/General/AvoidingPlagiarism.pdf?ext=.pdf)

## The Environmental Psychology Area

The correct title of the Program is "Environmental Psychology Area which is part of the Critical Social and Environmental Psychology Cluster of the Ph.D. Program in Psychology at The Graduate Center (GC), The City University of New York (CUNY)." This title reflects the five layers of governance however, for the sake of simplicity, in this *Handbook* the Program will be referred to as the "Environmental Psychology Area," or the "Environmental Psychology Program." As the content of the Program has become more interdisciplinary it has also felt appropriate to use the term "Environmental Social Science," and this is how we often refer to ourselves.

## **Faculty**

The Environmental Area Faculty is responsible for all academic and governance aspects of the Area, including participation in Coursework, Student Advisement, Academic Committees, Faculty Meetings, the Executive Committee, Program Events, First Doctoral Examinations, Second Doctoral Examinations, Dissertation Committees, and all decisions regarding Student Academic Status and Student Funding. The Area Faculty consists of The Graduate Center Central Line Appointments to the Area and the Extended Faculty. The Extended Faculty consists of faculty with primary appointments in other Psychology Areas or other CUNY Ph.D. Programs who are appointed or reappointed annually to the Area Faculty, first by a majority vote of the Area Executive Committee, and with the approval of the Psychology Ph.D. Program as required. The Executive Committee is responsible each fall for a Roster of the Extended Faculty. All Central Line Faculty Members are obligated to serve in the roles as described above; Extended Faculty may choose to serve in any of the roles as described above. To facilitate communication, all Advisors and Academic Committee Chairs are expected to attend an end of semester evaluation session. In addition to these faculty members, we have been enriched by many other faculty members in related fields who have been willing to work with environmental psychology program members.

## **Student Financial Assistance**

Applications for Financial Assistance should be made as soon as possible after January 1<sup>st</sup> for the following Fall semester. See <http://www.gc.cuny.edu/Prospective-Current-Students/Current-Students/Financial-Assistance>

## **Environmental Psychology Area Orientation Day**

The Area's Orientation Day is organized by the Area's House and Social Activities Committee and is separate from the general Graduate Center orientation as well as the Psychology Ph.D. Program orientation. It serves to introduce new students to each other and to the faculty; it is also useful as an introduction to the many "local" program resources available in undertaking graduate study. During the course of the orientation each student will:

- 1) **Be assigned to and meet with an advisor.** The faculty assigns an advisor to each entering student. Incoming students may choose to request a specific advisor. It is the hope of the faculty that all students, well before preparing for their Second Doctoral Examination, have a positive working relationship with their advisor. To assure that this happens, the faculty encourages students, after their first year in residence, to consider changing advisors.
- 2) **Complete Registration for Fall coursework.**
- 3) **Verify completion of the undergraduate statistics requirement.**
- 4) **Receive a work space, locker or file drawer assignment.**
- 5) **Students receive work assignments, if applicable.**

## **Student Information on the Web**

We are happy to have our students represented on the program's website. This is a fundamental way for understanding what we do. However, the "Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)" requires permission from the student before displaying any information that may be deemed personal or private. See <http://www.gc.cuny.edu/About-the-GC/Resource-Services/Governance-Policies-Procedures/Document?id=4343>

## SECTION 2: COURSEWORK

Of the sixty credits total, twenty-nine are in required courses and thirty-one are in electives. Students must receive a grade of "B" or better in all required courses and also maintain overall an average of "B" or better. Typically, students schedule coursework at "Full-time" status.

### **"Level" and "Status"**

Doctoral Students are considered by the Graduate Center to be "First Level" until the semester following their successful accumulation of 45 credits and successful completion of the First Doctoral Examination. First Level students are considered to be "Full-time" if they are registered for 7 or more credits and/or "Weighted Instructional Units" (WIUs). (WIUs are assigned for such student activities as teaching, exam preparation, and research.) Once a Doctoral Student passes beyond First Level to Second Level (and later to Third Level), there is no minimum number of credits required for Full-time status. "Part-Time" status refers exclusively to those First Level Doctoral students who are registered for fewer than 7 credits and/or WIUs. Different rates of tuition are charged depending on a student's Level, and whether a student is a resident of New York State. Both Full-Time and Part-time students at First Level out-of-state and international students are billed at the per-credit rate for all credits/WIUs. See <http://www.gc.cuny.edu/Prospective-Current-Students/Prospective-Students/Tuition-Fees>

### **Coursework in Other Programs, at Other Campuses, and the Interuniversity Doctoral Consortium**

The Environmental Psychology Area encourages students to search for appropriate coursework as they pursue their interests. There is a huge range of coursework available, given that students may choose appropriate graduate level courses in other Graduate Center programs, some on other CUNY campuses. Further, the Interuniversity Doctoral Consortium allows Graduate Center students to take specified coursework (at Graduate Center tuition rates) at Columbia University, Fordham University, The New School for Social Research and New York University, among others. See <http://www.gc.cuny.edu/About-the-GC/Resource-Services/Governance-Policies-Procedures/Document?id=4326>

### **Transferring Credits**

Credits from other institutions may sometimes be transferred. However, the Environmental Psychology Area limits the maximum number of transfer credits to 12, and does not consider requests for credit transfers until after the student has successfully completed the First Doctoral Examination. Credit transfer is proposed by a student's advisor to the Faculty based on course content, grades, and relevance to the Program. Decisions on credit transfers are made by the Faculty, after reviewing the student's achievement. Credits may be transferred as equivalent to specific required courses, or as "blanket" credits. Requests for transfer of credit for a specific required course must include a full course syllabus. Any credit transfer is contingent on official transcripts, which must be in the student's Psychology Ph.D. Program file. Neither transfer credits nor "P" ("Pass") grades can be counted towards the 45 graded credits required for an "en route" master's degree. See *Environmental Psychology Area Handbook*

**Section5: "En Route Master's Degree."** After approval by the faculty, the student's advisor fills out an "Advanced Standing Credit Recommendation" form, available from the GC Psychology Administrator.

## **New York State Licensing Information**

Some graduates of the Environmental Psychology Area choose to become licensed psychologists. Only licensed psychologists may use the term "psychologist" as any part of their professional title. Various coursework is required for Licensure; this coursework is available in the CUNY Psychology Ph.D. programs but not within the Environmental Psychology Area. Licensing in New York State is the purview of the Professional Licensing Service in Psychology, Albany, New York. Contact:

NY State Education Department Office of the Professions  
Division of Professional Licensing Services Psychology Unit  
89 Washington Avenue Albany, New York 12234-1000  
518-474-3817, ext. 592 (voice)  
518-402-2323 (fax)  
[opunit5@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:opunit5@mail.nysed.gov)

## **29 Credits of Required Coursework**

Most required courses are offered alternating semesters; the first table below lists the courses typically offered in the fall and second table below list the courses typically offered in the spring. Course schedule planning must be based on course availability.

<b>FALL SEMESTER (TYPICALLY)</b>	<b>COURSE #</b>	<b>CREDITS</b>
Current Issues in Psychology* ( <i>Year 1 &amp; 2</i> )	72300	0
Environmental Social Science I: Place, Space & Experience ( <i>Year 1</i> )	79100	3
Research Methods & Ethics ( <i>Year 1</i> )	79200	3
Research Laboratory I ( <i>Year 1</i> )	80101	1
Statistical Methods in Psychology I [Includes "Lab I"] ( <i>Year 1</i> )	70500	3
Field Research Seminar I ( <i>Year 2</i> )	80260	3
Environmental Social Science III: Social & Cultural Theories ( <i>Year 2</i> )	80100	3

<b>SPRING SEMESTER (TYPICALLY)</b>	<b>COURSE #</b>	<b>CREDITS</b>
Current Issues in Psychology* ( <i>Year 1 &amp; 2</i> )	72300	0
Environmental Social Science II: Ecological & Contextual Concepts ( <i>Year 2</i> )	80100	3
Methods Seminar [Unspecified] ( <i>Year 1 or 2</i> )	-----	3
Research Laboratory II ( <i>Year 2</i> )	80101	1
Statistical Methods in Psychology II [Includes "Lab II"] ( <i>Year 2</i> )	70600	3
Field Research Seminar II ( <i>Year 2</i> )	80270	3

\*Current Issues in Psychology is a required course for all students (in residence); this requirement also includes participation in the Program's annual Presentation Day.

Note: Students are encouraged to include coursework in the areas of "Policy," and "Professional Practice." There is a regularly changing menu of Graduate Center seminars that meet these requirements. Students should consult their advisors.

## **Coursework Schedule Decisions**

It is important that students meet regularly with advisors, especially to discuss coursework decisions. 29 credits of specific required coursework are combined with 31 elective credits for a total of 60 credits; some credits may, with the approval of the faculty, be transferred credits. Several factors will affect how a student selects coursework. First, a decision should be made about the total number of credits to be attempted each semester. All coursework could conceivably be completed in four semesters by taking 15 credits per semester or, as few as 12 credits per semester along with 12 transfer credits. Typically students take less than 15 credits a semester. It should be recognized that some required courses are sequential and must be taken in order. All students who are taking coursework in the Program are required to participate in Current Issues in Psychology.

### **Example: A Full-time, Six Semester Schedule of Coursework**

	<b>FALL SEMESTER</b>	<b>CREDITS</b>	<b>SPRING SEMESTER</b>	<b>CREDITS</b>
<b>YEAR 1</b>	Current Issues in Psychology	0	Current Issues in Psychology	0
	Environmental Social Science I	3	Environmental Social Science II	3
	Research Methods & Ethics	3	Methods Seminar [Unspecified]	3
	Research Laboratory I	1	Research Laboratory II	1
	Statistics I [Includes Stat Lab I]	3	Statistics II [Includes Stat Lab II]	3
		10		10
<b>YEAR 2</b>	Current Issues in Psychology	0	Current Issues in Psychology	0
	Environmental Social Science III	3	Field Research Seminar II	3
	Field Research Seminar I	3	Elective	3
	Elective	3	Elective	3
	Elective	3		9
		12		
<b>YEAR 3</b>	Elective	3	Elective	4
	Elective [Policy?]	3	Elective [Professional Practice?]	3
	Elective	3	Elective	3
		9		10
		<u>31</u>		<u>29</u>

## **Changing a Course Schedule During a Semester**

Courses may be added to or dropped from the schedule during the first three weeks of each semester. Also, withdrawal from a course is possible between the third and tenth weeks of the semester, using a "Course Withdrawal" form. These forms are available from and are processed through the Psychology Executive Office and require the advisor's signature.

## **Student Initiated Credits**

Students can initiate individual or group work for credit with permission of their advisor and the Psychology Executive Officer. This work can take the form of "Independent Research" or "Independent Readings," and requires a faculty member to act as mentor. In the past some exciting "working groups" have been formed to study issues theoretical, methodological or content perspective.

## **Methods Modules**

These short, typically five week courses, allow program members to define special skill areas and create a timely, flexible format for learning those skills.

## **Dissertation Seminar**

Over the past years we have had a Dissertation Seminar. Students may choose to participate in order to maintain a supportive environment while preparing for the Second Doctoral Examination, for writing a Topic Proposal or a Dissertation Proposal, and while conducting Dissertation Research. Because Dissertation Seminar is offered for 0 credits, students who have completed their allotted 60 credits do not pay additional tuition. The one ongoing requirement in Dissertation Seminar is to attend regularly.

## **Student Evaluation of Coursework**

Courses are evaluated by students. A first evaluation occurs before the end of the first half of the semester. Instructors are asked to allow time in each course for direct informal feedback, with a hope that courses might be improved. A final evaluation for each course, by each student, is submitted to a student volunteer who, for each course, summarizes the evaluations anonymously. These summaries are then passed on to the appropriate course instructor as well as to the Area Chair.

## **Evaluation of Student Progress: Annual Memos**

**Faculty Meeting & Memo Draft.** The Environmental Area Faculty will meet and discuss all students and their progress in late April or early May each academic year. The discussion will include any "Satisfactory Progress" issues identified by the Graduate Center. Comments from these discussions will be written into a Draft Memo by the student's advisor with talking points for the Student/Advisor meeting.

**Student/Advisor Meeting.** Both the student and the faculty advisor are responsible for arranging and being available for a formal meeting to discuss and reshape the Draft Memo. This meeting shall occur in May, preferably no later than the end of the spring semester.

**Scheduling the Student/Advisor Meeting.** If the student is not presenting on Presentation Day, the Student Advisor Meeting should be scheduled prior to Presentation Day. If the student is presenting, the meeting should be scheduled after the presentation. Advanced students and their advisors may mutually decide to hold a virtual meeting.

**Updates.** The student should arrive at the meeting with an updated CV including updates on course and milestone completion; The CV should include particular achievements such as fellowships, awards or journal article publications.

**Outcome of the Student/Advisor Meeting.** During the Meeting the student and advisor may make notes and comments on the Draft Memo, including plans for addressing any concerns raised by faculty. After edits are made an Annual Memo is written. Both the student and the Advisor sign indicating their agreement to the Annual Memo.

**Annual Student Memos** will be filed with the Psychology Student Progress Administrator. The following year, the faculty will review the previous year's Memo as part of the faculty discussion of student progress.

## SECTION 3: FIRST DOCTORAL EXAM

The **FIRST DOCTORAL EXAMINATION** covers a broad, basic grounding in the field of Environmental Social Science informed by the content of the required courses. The examination consists of multiple sections, each of which is evaluated separately. Passing the examination requires passing all its sections. If any section is not passed on the first try, one retake will be administered covering only the section or sections that were not passed. The “first doc” is written at the end of the semester in which a student completes a series of three required courses (ESS I, II, III)—typically at the end of the first semester of the second year. A student must pass the First Doctoral Examination as a condition of being allowed to register for any course credits beyond 45.

### **The Requirement and the Rationale**

The Graduate School Ph.D. Program in Psychology requires all students pass a First Examination, prior to registration for coursework above 45 credits. All coursework credit (including non-graded) and all transfer credits are included in computing this total. Each Area in Psychology determines the content and procedures for its own examination.

The First Examination is intended to assess the student’s progress and likelihood of continuing success in the Program. The Environmental Psychology Area has structured its First Examination procedure to reflect, first, the fact that students in the Program come from vastly different backgrounds and, second, the thoroughly interdisciplinary nature of the Program. Thus, the Area offers extensive preparatory coursework as grounding for the examination. Also, the examination is comprehensive both of the basic theoretical and methodological tools that underlie Environmental Social Science, as well as the student’s ability in analyzing traditional social science concepts for application to the study of environmental issues.

### **The Examination**

The First Doctoral Examination is a written examination given after the student has completed the first three semesters of required work. Graduate Center rules apply to Academic Honesty. See **The Graduate Center’s “Avoiding and Detecting Plagiarism: A Guide for Graduate Students and Faculty.”**

[http://www.gc.cuny.edu/CUNY\\_GC/media/CUNY-Graduate-Center/PDF/Policies/General/AvoidingPlagiarism.pdf?ext=.pdf](http://www.gc.cuny.edu/CUNY_GC/media/CUNY-Graduate-Center/PDF/Policies/General/AvoidingPlagiarism.pdf?ext=.pdf)

### **Outcomes of the Examination**

A “Pass” grade on the multiple sections of the examination is a representation by the faculty that the student is qualified to continue in the Program.

If a student does not achieve a “Pass” on all the sections in the first take, one retake is possible. Retakes cover only the section(s) not passed on the previous take. It is the responsibility of the faculty, through the student’s advisor, to provide general criticism of the deficiencies in the original examination, as a guide to preparation for the retake.

There are two conditions under which a student must withdraw or be withdrawn from the Psychology Program. First, withdrawal is required if the examination is not fully



passed after one retake. Second, withdrawal is required if the student has completed 45 credits without having fully passed the examination.

Students are encouraged to review their first doctoral exam with their advisor.

## SECTION 4: FIELD RESEARCH PAPER

The required **FIELD RESEARCH PAPER** is intended as an intermediate step towards a dissertation. It is a unique field research project designed, executed, and written by the student. The required course sequence is designed to provide both knowledge of relevant field research issues and a forum for cooperative work among colleagues. The Field Research Paper requirement is complete only after a student has successfully created a version of the paper that could be submitted for publication.

### The Requirement and the Rationale

Each student is required to produce a unique research project. Usually this project is original field research, but secondary analysis of existing data is also acceptable, subject to approval of the course instructor and advisor. Collaborative projects may be considered. Knowledge of field research is fundamental, even if a student may eventually produce a dissertation not based on field research. Completion of the field research project is an important step towards successful completion of the dissertation.

The evaluation of the final paper as well as the grade for the seminar represents the joint view of the course instructor and the advisor. The Area Chair or other third faculty member can be asked to read the paper to resolve any disagreements. The student must submit a copy of the approved paper to the Psychology Program EO Assistant, to be placed in the student's permanent file. A Field Research Paper Form must be completed and submitted. In addition, each student is encouraged but not required to include a copy of the Field Research Paper on the Environmental Psychology Area Website.

### Preparatory Coursework

During the first year, students are expected to take Research Methods and Ethics and the Research Lab I & II. The end product of this sequence, typically, is a research proposal that may be the basis for the Field Research Paper. This proposal is usually presented at the annual Environmental Psychology Presentation Day. Often students use the summer, between the first and second years, to collect field research data.

During the second year, students are expected to take the second two-course sequence, Field Research Seminar I & II. For students who do not finish their Field Research Paper before the end of the second course, "SP" is the assigned grade and a letter grade is given once the requirement is completed. The paper **must be finished within 2 years** from the end of the course or the student must withdraw from the program. During the coursework and through completion of the requirement, each student is expected to work with colleagues and also jointly with both the course instructor and the advisor. The evaluation of the final paper as well as the grade for the seminar represent the joint view of the course instructor and the advisor. The Area Chair or other third faculty member can be asked to read the paper to resolve any disagreements.

## **The Project**

The nature of the research and its scope will vary with the student. In most instances, however, the work will be empirical field research in environmental areas. The steps towards the Field Research Paper depend on the nature of the student's interests, as they unfold, and as approved by the course instructor and the advisor. Previously completed and approved papers may be available as a resource to all program members on the Environmental Area Website.

A major task for the student is to formulate the research problem. This process requires knowledge of the relevant existing literature and, as part of the completed paper, a critical literature review. Literature may be drawn from various (and sometimes competing) theoretical perspectives, from content areas within a single theoretical perspective, and from methodological perspectives. It is expected that the student will discuss how the research problem connects to, challenges, or corroborates specific relevant literature.

Another major task for the student is to formulate the research design, including a research question and appropriate research methodologies. Research design includes the selection of an appropriate research paradigm given the nature of the problem. Choices of research paradigms might couple with interest in advocacy work involving community groups or clients, a concern for theoretical advancement beyond the specific site, or content work within particular sites.

## **Format**

Part of the Field Research Paper requirement is that it be written in the format of a particular, appropriate scholarly journal. Submission to a journal is a good test of a paper's "publishability." The GC Library has available various Citation Managers and Style Guides. See: <http://libguides.gc.cuny.edu/content.php?pid=241407> Students present their papers (as works in progress) at the Area's Presentation Day, typically at the end of the Spring Semester.

## **Environmental Psychology Area As An Open Academic Community**

The Environmental Psychology Area strives to be an open academic community. It is expected that students have access to successful previous student work as models, inspiration and challenge for their own work. To make this work available, students are encouraged to post their work on the Environmental Psychology Website. In addition to posting the approved Second Year Field Research Paper, students are encouraged to post their Second Doctoral Examination Reading Lists and Statements, their Dissertation Topic Proposals, and their Dissertation Proposals. See: <http://enviropsych.org/> Students are encouraged but not required to place their work on this website. Students should however conform to the requirements of the journal to which they submit their papers as they relate to website postings.

In addition to the above materials, the Area maintains a full collection of theses.

While openness is important in an academic community, plagiarism is unacceptable. Ideas, phrases, sentences or paragraphs may not be copied or paraphrased without proper citation.

## **Human Subjects Research Approval**

**All research projects in the Environmental Area must be reviewed by the Graduate Center Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects.** In addition, there may be approvals or reviews required at the site where the work is undertaken or by an institutional review board. See: <http://www.gc.cuny.edu/About-the-GC/Resource-Services/Governance-Policies-Procedures/Document?id=4950>

## **Field Research Paper Approval Form**

The Environmental Psychology Area of the Critical Social and Environmental Psychology Cluster, The Ph.D. Program in Psychology,  
The Graduate Center, The City University of New York.

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**Student**

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**Date**

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**First Reader (Advisor, Environmental Faculty)**

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**Grade**

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**Instructor, Field Research Seminar I *or* II**

**Course grade change  
from "SP"?**

**Done**  
 **Not Required**

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**Environmental Psychology Area Chair or  
Third Psychology Faculty, if applicable.**

**IRB Approval?**

**Done**

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**Title**

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**Comments by Environmental Faculty, if applicable.**

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**Journal**

A "publishable" version of the paper must be prepared. Write the name of the Journal on the line above for which the publishable version has been formatted.

After successful completion of the Field Research Paper, the student is encouraged but not required to place a copy on the Area Website; a second copy is to be submitted to the Psychology Program EO Assistant which, along with this Field Research Approval Form, is to be placed in the student's file.

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**Signature, Environmental Area Chair**

## SECTION 5: EN ROUTE MASTER'S DEGREE

The Ph. D. degree is the only degree granted through the Ph.D. Program in Psychology. At the student's request an "En Route" **MASTER'S DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY** can be awarded, provided certain Graduate Center requirements have been fulfilled.

### **Requirements**

The requirements for an "En Route" Master's degree originate with the CUNY Graduate Center, not the Environmental Psychology Program. Information is available in the *Graduate Center's Student Handbook*. See: <http://www.gc.cuny.edu/About-the-GC/Resource-Services/Governance-Policies-Procedures/Document?id=4325> Here are some (but not all) of the rules that apply:

- 1) Current Enrollment (not on leave), both at the time of the request and at the time the degree is awarded.
- 2) A financial account "clear" of money owed to the bursar or library; no overdue loans.
- 3) Successful completion of the First Doctoral Examination.
- 4) Satisfactory completion of a major research paper. The field Research Paper can be used to satisfy this requirement, but it must be approved by three faculty members.
- 5) A minimum of 45 GPA (graded, not "P") credits with an average of "B" or better.

### **Transfer and GPA Credits**

Graduate credits earned at another institution but not applied towards a previous master's degree may be applied towards the En Route Master's, provided they have been approved as transfer credits by the Environmental Psychology faculty. However, credits earned at another institution that have been applied towards a master's degree may not be applied to the En Route Master's, even if they have been approved as transfer credits.

### **Filing with the Program Administrator**

Students who wish to file for an En Route Master's should consult with the Psychology Ph.D. Program APO for Academic Support and Student Progress.

## SECTION 6: SECOND DOCTORAL EXAM

The **SECOND DOCTORAL EXAMINATION** is a closed, two-hour oral examination of the student, by a faculty committee, on the scholarly literature from two topic areas relevant to the student's interests and planned dissertation research.

### On the Openness of Procedures

While the Second Doctoral Examination is not a public event, an aspect of it is, so it is appropriate to raise the issue of openness at this point in the *Environmental Psychology Area Handbook*. **Those requirements which occur after completion of coursework—the Second Doctoral Examination Statement (but not the Second Doctoral Examination itself), the Dissertation Proposal, and the Dissertation Defense—are all conducted as public events.** There are several reasons for this openness. First, openness encourages clarity in students' work. Second, each of these events is a forum for ideas stimulating both to faculty and to students. Third, an open process enhances Program culture by providing links between students at different levels as well as between students and faculty who are not otherwise directly involved on a committee.

### Summary of the Requirement

The Ph.D. Program in Psychology requires that all students pass a Second Examination. Each of the Areas in Psychology determines the content and procedures for its own second exam. In the Environmental Psychology Area, the examination is a closed, two-hour oral examination, focused on two topic areas of scholarly work, relevant to the student's interests. Topic areas and the examination committee are assembled by the student as part of a process that includes the student's advisor, and which requires approval by the Area Chair. The committee consists of at least three members and must include at least two members of the Environmental Area Faculty and may include up to two additional members. Prior to the examination, a student prepares a thoughtfully categorized list of readings and a brief examination statement. The examination statement and the reading list are made openly available via e-mail to all program members. The Second Examination can be taken no earlier than the semester during which the student anticipates completion of 53 or more credits, and only after successful completion of the Field Research Paper, in its publishable form. See *Environmental Psychology Area Handbook, Section 4, "Field Research Paper."* The Dissertation Seminar is offered regularly in the program to help students prepare for the Second Examination.

### The Examination Committee

A student who plans to take the Second Examination should begin by consulting with her or his advisor regarding the topic areas that will be selected. Concurrently, the advisor and the student work together to propose an examining committee, of which the advisor is chair, consisting of at least two Environmental Area faculty members, chosen as appropriate to the evolving topic areas. **There must be at least two members of the Environmental Area faculty on the committee, but other experts in the areas may be chosen to make a third or fourth committee member.** These

additional committee members may be chosen for particular expertise, regardless of their academic credentials and might, for instance, include practitioners or academics from other disciplines. **Final approval of the committee rests with the Environmental Area Chair and requires filing of the Second Doctoral Examination Committee Proposal Form.**

## **The Reading List**

The student proceeds to develop a thorough reading list for each topic area. The reading list should include the major, representative references in the area. It is *not* expected that the reading list should include *all* references in the topic area. To keep the readings within manageable limits, the student and the committee must clarify the boundaries of the topic and how to develop a useful reading list. **The student will be expected to be knowledgeable of theory, content and methodology within the boundaries of the chosen topic areas.**

The student works towards preparation of a "Final Draft Version" of the reading list. It is advisable throughout the entire process for the student to discuss the reading list extensively with committee members, either individually or as a group. With her or his advisor's approval, the final draft version, organized with sub-headings and with a brief (one or two sentence) description of each sub-heading, should be distributed to all program members. Accompanying this "Final Draft Version" should be an invitation to comment. Approval of the final reading lists rests solely with the student's Examination Committee. **The Committee's approval of the final reading lists must be obtained at least six weeks prior to the actual examination date.**

## **The Pre-Examination Statement**

The Purpose of the statement is to integrate the student's knowledge of the topic areas, from the readings, with his or her own critical thinking. **The entire statement should be between six and ten pages, not exceeding ten,** doubled spaced, with full margins and readable type. **The final statement must be submitted to the committee no less than two weeks prior to the examination.**

Topic areas, of course, vary in conceptual development, the amount and type of research conducted and the quality of that research. The statement should characterize and be an accurate reflection of the current state of development of the topic areas. The statement can treat topic areas as separate entities or it can analyze relationships between topic areas; the statement can be organized as a neutral outline of ideas or as an assertion of particular positions. *The numbered items below suggest some ways to focus the pre-examination statement.* In any event, the statement must demonstrate links with the readings list by citing specific readings.

The statement will not be graded nor is it expected to be the final statement on the student's part. However, if, upon reading the statement, the committee members feel that the student is not fully prepared to pass the examination, they are expected to postpone the examination and request that the student resubmit the statement in a revised form. **The statement serves as a means to assess the student's preparation for the examination as well as an organizing focus for the two-hour oral examination, itself.**



## The Oral Examination

The advisor chairs the oral examination. The examination opens with a brief statement by the student restating the theme of the examination, as well as comments on, elaboration of or changes to the examination statement. *This is an opportunity for the student to set some of the direction of the oral examination by raising particular issues of interest in the topic areas.* Next, committee members ask questions of the student, covering issues such as—but not limited to—the following numbered items:

- 1) The major issues in each topic area; expansions upon specific studies or approaches.
- 2) Descriptions and criticism—strengths and weaknesses—of the theoretical and methodological approaches within the literature.
- 3) Research designs and major variables considered by various researchers; comparisons of these research designs.
- 4) An outline of theoretical and methodological approaches the student might pursue in a dissertation, including people and environments to be considered, and techniques to be employed.
- 5) The particular readings a student might select—and why—if the student were teaching an advanced course in the topic area.

*Any of the above numbered items might be the basis for questions in the oral examination, whether the student has or has not chosen to include these issues in the statement.*

Finally, when there are about 15 minutes remaining in the allotted time, the student is asked to leave the room and the committee discusses and evaluates the student's accomplishment.

## Outcomes of the Examination

One of three grades can be assigned by the committee on the **Record of Second Doctoral Examination**: "Pass," "Qualified Pass," or "Fail."

**Pass**, of course, needs no explanation. However, in some exceptional cases the committee may choose to add "**With Distinction**" to the "Pass" grade.

**Qualified Pass** requires either that the student be examined further at a time determined by the committee in specific areas which have been judged to be deficient, or that the student be required by the committee to write additional material to demonstrate adequate comprehension of deficient areas. A qualified pass does *not* fulfill the requirement; only a "Pass" allows the student to move on.

**Fail** means that the student is entitled to retake the oral examination for a second attempt. Only the portion failed is retaken. On the second taking of the examination, the same set of grades will be available, with the exception that a second grade of "Fail" requires that the student leave the Program.

**After successful completion of the Second Doctoral Examination, the student is required to submit a final version of the pre-examination statement and readings list to the Psychology EO Program Administrator for placement in the student's permanent file.** To make this work available, students are encouraged to

post their work on the Environmental Psychology Website. See: <http://enviropsych.org/>  
Students are encouraged but not required to place their work on this website.

## **Second Doctoral Examination Committee Proposal Form**

The Environmental Psychology Area of the Critical Social and Environmental Psychology Cluster, The Ph.D. Program in Psychology,  
The Graduate Center, The City University of New York.

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**Student**

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**Date**

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**Committee Chair (Advisor, Environmental Faculty)**

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**2<sup>nd</sup> Committee Member (Environmental Faculty)**

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**4<sup>th</sup> Committee Member (If Applicable)**

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**3<sup>rd</sup> Committee Member**

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**5<sup>th</sup> Committee Member (If Applicable)**

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**First Proposed Topic**

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**Second Proposed Topic**

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**Comments**

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**Signature, Committee Chair (Advisor)**

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**Signature, Environmental Area Chair**

## **Record of Second Doctoral Examination**

The Environmental Psychology Area of the Critical Social and Environmental Psychology Cluster, The Ph.D. Program in Psychology,  
The Graduate Center, The City University of New York.

---

**Student**

---

**Date**

---

**Committee Chair (Advisor, Environmental Faculty)**

- First Attempt**  
 **Second Attempt**

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**2<sup>nd</sup> Committee Member (Environmental Faculty)**

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**4th Committee Member (If Applicable)**

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**3<sup>rd</sup> Committee Member**

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**5th Committee Member (If Applicable)**

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**First Topic**

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**Second Topic (If Applicable)**

One of three grades can be assigned by the committee: "Pass," "Qualified Pass," or "Fail."

**Pass**, of course, needs no explanation. However in some exceptional cases the committee may choose to add "**With Distinction**" to the "Pass" grade.

**Qualified Pass** requires either that the student be examined further at a time determined by the committee in specific areas which have been judged to be deficient, or that the student be required by the committee to write additional material to demonstrate adequate comprehension of deficient areas.

**Fail** means that the student is entitled to retake the entire oral examination for a second attempt. On the second taking of the examination, the same set of grades will be available, with the exception that a second grade of Fail requires that the student leave the Program.

**After successful completion of the Second Doctoral Examination, the student is required to submit a final version of the pre-examination statement and readings list to the Psychology EO Program Administrator for placement in the student's permanent file. The student is urged to also place a copy on the Environmental Psychology Website.**

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**Grade**

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**Recommendations**

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**Signature, Committee Chair (Advisor)**

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**Signature, Environmental Area Chair**

## SECTION 7: TOPIC PROPOSAL

After completion of the full 60 credits of coursework and the **SECOND DOCTORAL EXAMINATION** a student creates and files a **DISSERTATION TOPIC PROPOSAL**. Part of the process is **SELECTION OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE**. Successful completion of this step is necessary to move to the Third Level and to be advanced to candidacy.

### Types of Dissertations

Environmental social science is an evolving field that encompasses at least three general types or categories of dissertations.

#### **1) Empirical-Theoretical**

Most dissertations in the field are done in this category. Typically, they consist of an empirical study that is tied to existing theoretical positions. Within this category there are several possible variations.

##### **A) Theoretical-Deductive**

Existing theoretical positions are discussed and analyzed, perhaps a new variant is proposed, empirical consequences for the particular topic concerned are deduced, and these consequences are systematically tested.

##### **B) Exploratory**

An exploratory dissertation is indicated when the existing theory does not allow for adequate understanding of the particular topic, when it is suspected that the variables have not yet been isolated adequately, or when the phenomenon itself has not been adequately conceptualized and specified.

##### **C) Methodological**

Some dissertations develop new methodologies of data collection, relationships of researcher and that which is researched, use of media, or modes of analysis. The theoretical basis of the methodology is to be demonstrated, criteria such as validity and reliability of the method must be addressed, and an empirical demonstration of its usefulness is required.

#### **2) Applied-Empirical**

An applied dissertation must do more than solve a specific and isolated case study problem; it must throw light on questions related to larger issues in environmental social science, or it must contribute to the development of theory or clarification of significant issues by generalizing to other situations either in terms of methods or findings or general principles.

#### **3) Theoretical**

This type of dissertation may draw upon theoretical work from a wide variety of disciplines as well as empirical research relevant to the topic. The focus must be environmental and it is expected that the theoretical position developed will lead to testable consequences, at least in principle.

### Development of a Dissertation Problem

The Development of a dissertation problem can be the most important and most difficult aspect of the entire pursuit of a Ph.D. There are no fixed rules which can be followed; each individual approaches the process reflecting personal style of thought and action. Some steps which might be taken include:

- 1) **Reflection on the content of the Second Doctoral Exam; reflection on earlier research and experience.**
- 2) **Deep advisor-student discussions.**
- 3) **Discussion with other colleagues, including faculty and students; participation in Dissertation Seminar.**
- 4) **Review of other literature, including previous dissertations.**

## **Scope of a Topic Proposal**

The Topic Proposal is very brief. It is only one-half page and is included with the **Dissertation Topic Proposal & Dissertation Committee Selection Form**. The content of a Topic Proposal is a very individual matter. A good basic model has these two paragraphs:

- 1) **The problem area to be researched**
- 2) **The intended type of research design**

This content serves to do no more than stake out the boundaries within which the Dissertation Proposal will later be developed. It becomes a record of the student's priority and thereby establishes a claim to the area. Further, the dialogic process of creating the statement is a means of negotiation with prospective Dissertation Committee Members.

## **Dissertation Committee Selection.**

The Dissertation Committee consists first of the Student's advisor (a member of the Environmental Psychology Area Faculty), who becomes chair of the committee. At least one more member of the Environmental Psychology Area Faculty is proposed. Next, another member is selected, who may or may not be an Environmental Psychology Faculty Member, for a total of three. In addition, one or two more committee members may be proposed and they may or may not be members of the Environmental Psychology Area Faculty, depending on the expertise required by the dissertation topic. **The complete dissertation committee must be approved by the Program Chair and by the Executive Officer of Psychology, using the Dissertation Topic Proposal & Dissertation Committee Selection Form.** If any of the proposed committee are not members of the Graduate Center Ph.D. Faculty, a Vita and letter of explanation must be submitted to the Program Chair.

There are a number of factors that are involved when a person is selected to serve on a dissertation committee. These include:

- 1) **Knowledge of the dissertation topic; knowledge of methodology.**
- 2) **Ability to work effectively with the student and other committee members.**
- 3) **A willingness to respond to the student's or chair's request for dissertation assistance in a timely and constructive manner.**

## **Advancement to Candidacy**

Once the **Dissertation Topic Proposal and Dissertation Committee Selection Form** is approved by the program chair, by the Executive Officer of the Psychology Ph.D. program, and filed with the Psychology EO Program Administrator, a student may be advanced to candidacy. "Dissertation requirements are outlined in a document sent to

doctoral candidates by the registrar when they are advanced to candidacy.” See ***The Graduate Center Student Handbook***, for details.

## **Dissertation Topic Proposal & Dissertation Committee Selection Form**

The Environmental Psychology Area of the Critical Social and Environmental Psychology Cluster, The Ph.D. Program in Psychology,  
The Graduate Center, The City University of New York.

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**Student**

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**Date**

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**Chair, Dissertation Committee (Environmental Faculty)**

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**2<sup>nd</sup> Committee Member (Environmental Faculty)**

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**4<sup>th</sup> Committee Member (If Applicable)**

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**3<sup>rd</sup> Committee Member**

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**5<sup>th</sup> Committee Member (If Applicable)**

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**Working Title**

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The Topic Proposal should be written on the opposite side of this form, no longer than one-half page.

There must be at least two committee members, including the sponsor, who are members of the Environmental Psychology faculty. If any proposed additional members of the committee are not members of the Graduate Center Ph.D. faculty, a Vita and letter of explanation must be submitted to the Area Chair.

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**Signature of Approval, Committee Chair**

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**Date**

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**Environmental Area Chair**

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**Executive Officer, Ph.D. Program in Psychology**

After approval and filing of this form, the student should check with the EO Psychology program administrator to see that the Registrar has been notified and that Advancement to Candidacy has taken place.



## SECTION 8: DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

The next step in the dissertation process is the **DISSERTATION PROPOSAL, a detailed statement describing the problem to be researched, its relevance to the existing literature, and the theoretical, practical and methodological aspects of addressing that research question.** Often, sections of the proposal—such as the literature review or the methodology—become parts of the completed dissertation with only slight modification. Candidates are expected to meet regularly with their sponsor and dissertation committee during the proposal writing process; dissertation committee members are expected to make themselves available for this interaction, either individually or with full committee meetings. A public presentation of the proposal is made when it is nearly complete. All dissertation proposals must be submitted to and approved by the GC Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects. No dissertation research can proceed without first obtaining **Dissertation Proposal Clearance: Human Participants** form.

### **Development and Approval of the Proposal**

The approved dissertation proposal represents an agreement between the candidate and the dissertation committee. Once the dissertation committee approves the proposal, it must be submitted to the Graduate Center Committee on Human Subjects and an approved **Dissertation Proposal Clearance: Human Participants** form must be obtained. At this point the dissertation work can proceed and neither the committee nor the candidate can later change these ground rules arbitrarily. It is therefore crucial to both the candidate and the committee that the proposal is thorough in describing as fully as is reasonably possible the plans for research, including a practical plan for sequence, time and resources. Even in the case of participatory or exploratory research, where plans for more than one or more steps in the research may be contingent on the results of earlier research steps, it is imperative that the process for developing the research steps be spelled out fully.

The Dissertation Proposal is a major undertaking that will require extensive literature research. Further, while the dissertation research cannot proceed without full approval, it is sometimes necessary to complete a preliminary or “pilot” research in order to establish the precise procedures specified in the proposal.

The completed proposal should contain:

- 1) A clear statement of the problem; background to the problem; identification of the research question.**
- 2) A critical literature review, often in several relevant areas.**
- 3) A clear statement and exposition of the research questions, hypotheses, or issues to be pursued.**

- 4) **A detailed description of various research methods, instruments to be used, procedures to be followed, and the kind of data analysis that is planned.**
- 5) **Agreements with participating institutions, consent forms for participants, and approval from the GC Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects.**

The proposal is written in close consultation with the advisor and other members of the dissertation committee. Different dissertation committees proceed differently and different dissertation problems require different working approaches. The candidate may meet with individual members of the committee or, particularly if there are contradictory viewpoints among committee members, it may be in the interest of the candidate to request meetings of the full committee. **Prior to approval, a full draft version of the proposal is presented by the candidate to the full Dissertation Committee in a meeting that is open to all program members.** This open meeting allows public comment but is not, in itself, a form for approval or disapproval of the proposal. For a proposal to be approved, all committee members must agree as indicated by signatures on the *Dissertation Proposal Approval Form*, a copy of which can be obtained from the GC Psychology Program Administrator.

## **Participants in Research**

If participants are chosen because of their affiliation with an organization or institution, permission for doing the research will generally be required from that organization or institution. In addition, all research done at the Graduate Center is subject to the rules of the **Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects**. Materials for compliance with this requirement are available in the **Office of Research and Sponsored Programs**, or through its website, <http://www.gc.cuny.edu/About-the-GC/Provost-s-Office/Research-Sponsored-Programs>

All doctoral students are required to submit a **Dissertation Proposal Approval** form, **prior to the commencement of research**. The **Human Participants Certification** form, which requires the signature the Provost, must be submitted with the completed doctoral dissertation and deposited at the Graduate Center.

## **Instructions to the Sponsor and Committee**

During the period of proposal preparation, it is the responsibility of the sponsor and committee to provide guidance and support to the candidate in the following areas:

- 1) **It is the sponsor's responsibility to provide direction so that the candidate can prepare acceptable drafts of the dissertation proposal.**
- 2) **The candidate is encouraged to involve committee members in the development of the proposal.**
- 3) **One the sponsor has approved a draft of the proposal it is the candidate's responsibility to submit the proposal to the committee members.**
- 4) **Within four weeks after submission to the committee members, they must contact the sponsor to indicate whether they agree with the proposals as it stands or whether changes must be made in the proposal.**
- 5) **If any committee member thinks that the proposal requires a major change in the direction of the dissertation, the member must request**

**full committee meeting to discuss the changes that must be made on the proposal.**

- 6) The dissertation committee must agree that the proposal is ready for public proposal presentation before the presentation can occur.**

Anyone may ask questions at the public presentation.

## SECTION 9: THE DISSERTATION

Successful preparation, completion and approval of a research dissertation requires the breaking of some new ground in methods, content or theory. It is **a unique undertaking**. While the faculty sponsor has primary responsibility for mentoring the candidate, all dissertation committee members are expected to contribute to the process. In order to keep the dissertation committee abreast and to insure timely progress, the candidate should meet with the committee at least once a semester.

### The Research

Major tasks during this phase of the work are preparation of the research protocols, collection of data, data analysis, and interpretation of results, as defined in the dissertation proposal. The actual conduct of the research is the responsibility of the candidate, but the candidate should maintain regular contact with members of the dissertation committee and the dissertation sponsor.

If any conditions arise which require changes from the procedures described in the dissertation proposal, those changes should be discussed with the dissertation sponsor and, if appropriate, approved by the dissertation committee. A statement by the student detailing the approved changes and signed by the sponsor should be submitted to the program chair for inclusion in the files of the Psychology Doctoral Program Office.

Committee members should inform the candidate one semester prior to any planned sabbatical, leave or absence; if necessary, the sponsor should arrange for an acting replacement so that meetings can occur and progress can be made.

**Dissertation Seminar** can be very useful as a forum for constructive feedback while carrying out research. This seminar carries no credit and costs nothing. However, one fixed expectation is that those who join dissertation seminar are expected to attend and participate regularly.

### Writing the Dissertation

Candidates work with their dissertation committees in a dialogical process of outlining, draft writing, illustration, and discussion. Writing styles vary, and what is appropriate for one project may not be for another. Therefore, some candidates submit detailed outlines before writing any individual sections, while others may benefit by writing some sections fully before attempting to fix the structure of the whole. Some committee members prefer to have chapters submitted as they are written, while others choose to wait until a full draft is available before reading and commenting on any single part. This is one of the areas of discussion between the candidate and the dissertation committee members.

### The Dissertation Draft

The candidate works with the sponsor to develop a draft version of the dissertation. It is especially important during the draft stage that the sponsor meets reasonable requests for timely feedback. Other members of the dissertation committee may be involved as a whole or individually, depending on the working style agreed to by the candidate and the

committee. Usually the dissertation committee responds with comments written on the draft copy of the dissertation. Typically there are iterations of the draft writing stage. With the advice of the sponsor, the candidate may request a meeting of the committee, especially if this appears to be an effective way of resolving differences in responses to a draft.

## **Evaluation of the Dissertation Draft by the Dissertation Committee**

Once the sponsor believes that the dissertation draft is likely to be acceptable to the dissertation committee, a request is made to the committee for a formal evaluation of the dissertation, by distributing up-to-date copies of the complete dissertation and a copy of the **Ph.D. Dissertation Evaluation Form**. It is expected that the committee will respond to this request for evaluation in a timely manner. It should be noted that **it generally takes four to six weeks to have the committee review the thesis** for approval. It is the candidate's responsibility to consult committee members about their schedules and time commitments. The candidate should allow adequate time for this process.

While there may or may not be a meeting of the full dissertation committee to consider evaluation of the dissertation, approval of a dissertation remains an individual decision of each committee member. The evaluation form allows only two choices and both indicate approval: The dissertation may be approved "as it stands," or it may be approved "except for minor revisions." If the committee member does not approve the dissertation within the allowable choices, the dissertation committee member **must not sign the Ph.D. Dissertation Evaluation Form**. Instead, the member must contact the dissertation sponsor to discuss the areas of concern. This may lead to resolution of the issues or to a full dissertation committee meeting. The dissertation approval process can continue only when at least all but one of the committee members have approved the dissertation "as it stands," or "except for minor revisions."

It is neither appropriate nor possible to consider every possible type of "minor" revision. However, in an effort to provide guidance as to what should be considered "major" and therefore **not signed off on**, here are some criteria:

- 1) The omission of a body of literature that is directly relevant to the dissertation topic or the dissertation findings without an explanation for its omission.**
- 2) Failure to consider recent literature (i.e. literature published since the proposal was approved) that is directly relevant to the dissertation topic.**
- 3) Failure to address alternative conceptualizations of the dissertation findings in areas that are directly within the domain of the dissertation topic area.**
- 4) Significantly inadequate and/or incomplete analysis of empirical data from the dissertation.**
- 5) Major structural changes in the organization of the dissertation (e.g. the order and flow among chapters; failure to carry a theoretical perspective through to the results and/or discussion and/or interpretation.**

If a committee member does not approve a dissertation, it is imperative that the committee member's criticisms are communicated fully and effectively first to the sponsor, and eventually to the candidate. This may be done in writing or in a discussion which, if the candidate chooses, may be recorded.

## **Evaluation of the Dissertation by the Outside Readers**

Once the sponsor believes that the dissertation draft is likely to be approved by the dissertation committee, it may be distributed to outside readers. If the sponsor does not have reason to believe that the committee is ready to approve the dissertation draft, it should **not** be distributed to the outside readers, because doing so could lead to the outside readers having to re-read and re-evaluate the entire dissertation. **The process for evaluation by the outside readers is precisely the same as for committee members, using the Ph.D. Dissertation Evaluation Form, as described above, and also may take from four to six weeks.**

Selection of the two, or sometimes three, outside readers **is usually done long before the dissertation has reached the draft stage.** Outside readers may be selected because of prominence in a particular field of study or additional experience or insight, complementary to that of the dissertation committee. Outside readers do not have to be a member of the faculty or this or any other university; they do not have to have academic credentials. As outside readers are selected, they should be given a copy of the **Information for Outside Readers** sheet appended to the end of this section. The candidate and sponsor propose the outside readers to the Area Chair; once agreed to by the Area Chair a memo is sent to the Executive Officer of Psychology who, in turn, seeks approval from the University Provost. The Provost has been known to authorize a small stipend for a reader who is not a member of the City University faculty.

Once both the outside readers and the dissertation committee have approved the dissertation ("as it stands," or "with minor revisions"), the advisor (who now becomes the "sponsor") moves to form the **Dissertation Examining Committee**, by setting a date for the defense. The Dissertation Examining Committee usually consists of all the dissertation committee (requiring a minimum of three Environmental Psychology faculty, including the sponsor) and all the outside readers. The Dissertation Examining Committee is responsible for the final evaluation of the thesis through the conduct of the dissertation defense or "oral defense," also referred to as the "Third Doctoral Examination." The sponsor sets the examination date. The examination date must be set far enough ahead to allow **a minimum of 4 weeks** from the time the Psychology EO Program Administrator receives signed approvals, using the **Ph.D. Dissertation Evaluation Form**, from at least all but one of the dissertation defense committee members.

## **The Graduate Center Dissertation Librarian**

It is useful for the candidate to consult with the GC dissertation librarian early on in the writing of the dissertation. Currently two print copies and one electronic copy in PDF format must be deposited. See [http://library.gc.cuny.edu/INFO/doc\\_diss\\_ltr.htm](http://library.gc.cuny.edu/INFO/doc_diss_ltr.htm) and refer also to <http://dissertations.umi.com/minarees/>. There are very specific requirements for a dissertation in Psychology. Doing this early can prevent last minute difficulties in formatting and organizing the dissertation. In the past, some candidates have found the librarian pleasantly helpful.

At this point it is also important to recall that the ***Human Participants Certification*** form must be submitted with your completed doctoral dissertation. See <http://web.gc.cuny.edu/orup/humansubjects.html>.

## **American Psychological Association Style**

It is to the candidate's benefit that even a first dissertation draft should conform to APA style. It is logical to use APA style for all drafts because it is required for the final draft by the dissertation librarian. Failure to do this can add several weeks of unnecessary work and thereby delay evaluation of the thesis. The most recent version of the ***Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*** should be consulted for precise rules regarding the use of references, tables, footnotes, figures, bibliographies, and page layout. The ***Manual*** includes guidelines for the use of nonsexist language.

## INFORMATION FOR OUTSIDE READERS

We are very pleased that you have agreed to become an outside reader for a dissertation in Environmental Psychology. The dissertation committee members and the outside readers, combined, constitute that **Dissertation Examining Committee**. Because dissertation policies and procedures vary across programs and universities, this information sheet offers us the opportunity to describe the system that we have developed for this final doctoral phase.

We hope that you will find your involvement in the dissertation review and defense to be an interesting experience. If anything in this description of procedures is not clear, please contact the dissertation advisor for further explanations. Many thanks for your participation.

### Who Qualifies To Be An Outside Reader

Outside readers are selected for the particular expertise they have on the dissertation topic. They do not have to be members of the faculty of this or any other university, nor is a doctoral degree required.

Once outside readers are selected their names are sent to the Program Chair for approval. A Curriculum Vitae must be submitted for any outside readers who are not members of the Graduate Center faculty. The Psychology Executive Officer, in turn, submits these names to the GC Provost for approval.

### Development of the Dissertation

Our goal in the development of the dissertation is to create supportive, collegial procedures that enable a dissertation of the highest level of scholarship to be produced. The development of a dissertation is a challenging experience. We have attempted to prevent unnecessary difficulties by building in safeguards to encourage efficient progress of the work.

The dissertation draft that you will review is the end product of a collaborative process involving the candidate, his or her dissertation advisor and two committee members. All three members have worked closely with the student from the development of the dissertation proposal to the present time. Regular meetings have been held to assess the student's progress and to deal with issues at critical points in the development and conduct of the work.

### The Review Process

Although the candidate has worked most closely with his or her advisor, each member has been consulted, either through individual meetings or dissertation committee meetings. When outside readers are selected, they may be consulted at a point prior to receiving the dissertation draft for review, particularly if they have an area of expertise that is not represented by other members of the committee. Other outside readers may be contacted when the draft is completed. The draft of the dissertation will be sent to you along with a Dissertation Evaluation Form. It is hoped that you will be able to review the dissertation draft and submit the Dissertation Evaluation Form in no more than four weeks' time. The Dissertation Defense, which is properly called the "Final Examination," cannot be scheduled until your completed Dissertation Evaluation Form has been received. At that time a minimum of four weeks must be allowed before the Final Examination can be scheduled. If these time constraints create a problem for you, please contact the dissertation advisor before reviewing the dissertation.

With respect to the review of the draft, because the basic framework of the dissertation has been set with the approval of the Dissertation Proposal by the three committee members, the outside readers cannot request that new research questions or totally new methodologies be undertaken. There is great leeway, however, in the kinds of



suggestions and criticisms that can be made in our efforts to produce sound, theoretically and methodologically robust dissertations.

If you believe that major revisions are necessary, do not sign the sign Dissertation Evaluation Form. Instead, the dissertation sponsor should be notified.

If you read the dissertation draft and feel that either no revisions or only minor revisions are required, you sign and return the completed form. This enables the Final Examination to be scheduled. The Dissertation Evaluation Form has space where the needed minor revisions must be specified.

### **The Final Examination Procedures**

While every Final Examination has an individual quality, in general, some commonalities exist. Defenses in Environmental Psychology are "open," that is, they are open to students, faculty, and guests invited by the candidate. Examinations generally last for two hours. The dissertation sponsor may request an additional time of up to an hour for discussion by the committee and readers. In most cases the additional time is not needed but there have been instances when this communication process was essential for identifying clearly the kinds of revisions needed for the efficient completion of the final version.

The defense begins with a statement by the candidate, providing an opportunity to summarize issues, add any new points or raise questions. Following this introduction, the chair offers the outside readers the first opportunity to question the candidate. Members of the dissertation committee follow in their questioning. The questioning and discussion continues until all members of the Dissertation Examining Committee (committee members and outside readers) have completed their questioning. Some advisors then open up the questioning to the other people present. The constraint is that the questioning end one hour and forty-five minutes after the onset to enable the Dissertation Examining Committee an opportunity to discuss the candidate's performance.

### **Discussion of the Candidate's Performance**

The Dissertation Examining Committee must make a judgment of the Final Examination and any problems identified in the course of questioning. In order to pass the Final Examination, all members of the Dissertation Examining Committee, with no more than one dissent, must agree that either no changes or minor changes are needed. The "Report of Final Examination" form must be signed by each member. The advisor must record the nature of the minor revisions required (if any) and these are then given to the candidate. Minor revisions are reviewed and approved solely by the committee chair.

It is possible that even though a dissertation draft must have been approved "except for minor revisions," minimally, prior to a Final Examination, that the Dissertation Examining Committee may find, upon examination, that various "minor" revisions accumulate and that "major" revisions are required. If so, this must be indicated on the "Report of the Final Examination" form and the dissertation must be resubmitted for approval by the chair and two members of the examining committee.

It is also possible that the examining committee may decide that the candidate has failed the Final Examination itself. The Report of the Final Examination would indicate this failure and, further, would indicate recommendations as agreed to by the committee majority.

## SECTION 10: THE FINAL EXAMINATION

The dissertation committee members and the outside readers, combined, constitute the **Dissertation Examining Committee**. The final examination can be scheduled only after all members of the Dissertation Examining Committee (with no more than one dissent) have signed the Ph.D. Dissertation Evaluation Form; from that time, a minimum of 4 weeks must be allowed before the oral examination can be held. The Final Examination or "defense" is a public event. The Dissertation Examining Committee instructs the candidate as to what, if any, additional revisions or other steps are required to finally complete the dissertation.

### **Revisions Prior to the Final Examination**

The **Dissertation Evaluation Form** (often augmented by written comments on a draft copy of the dissertation) should describe in adequate detail all revisions and alterations that the dissertation examining committee requires. It is the sponsor's responsibility to see that the candidate has all this material from the dissertation examining committee in hand well before the examination date. This time allowance is necessary so that the candidate can fully address committee members' concerns by the time of the examination. The **Dissertation Evaluation Form** is available from the GC Psychology EO Program Administrator.

### **The Dissertation Examining Committee**

The dissertation examining committee is chaired by the dissertation sponsor (formerly the "advisor") and consists of the dissertation committee members (minimally and usually 3, including the sponsor) and the outside readers (minimally and usually 2).

### **The Final Examination Schedule**

Two hours are scheduled for the examining committee to complete the dissertation final examination process: a maximum of an hour and three-quarters for the public presentation and discussion, followed by one quarter hour for discussion by the committee and for the completion of administrative details.

At the beginning of the public presentation and discussion, the sponsor describes procedures that will be followed. The candidate then has a maximum of 15 minutes to deliver an opening statement, which summarizes the research and its results and interpretations. The candidate may also use some of this time to address committee members' comments on the dissertation.

After the opening statement, the sponsor usually offers the outside readers the first opportunity to question the candidate. Next, the other members of the dissertation examining committee continue until all members have completed their questioning. Finally, the sponsor may (or may not) choose to open the discussion to other people

present. At the end of the examination the sponsor asks the candidate and guests to leave the room while the committee deliberates. Once the examining committee has

made its decision, the candidate is asked to reappear and is told of the decisions made by the examining committee.

## **The Final Examination as a Public Event**

The Provost of the University formally invites the dissertation examining committee to participate in this important occasion. The student is responsible for publicizing the event.

The dissertation final examination is "open" in that faculty, students and guests are welcome to attend. However, as chair of the final examination, the sponsor sets protocols and assures that a collegial atmosphere is maintained. The public defense is a traditional ritual that recognizes the transition the candidate is undergoing.

To facilitate informed discussion, the candidate may make a copy of the dissertation available in the Environmental Psychology Area to any interested colleague.

## **Absence of an Examining Committee Member**

If, after signing the "Ph.D. Dissertation Evaluation Form," and thus agreeing to the date and time for a final examination, an emergency prevents a committee member from attending the examination, it may proceed if the sponsor so chooses. The missing member may submit written questions to the sponsor, to be asked at the final examination. Or, alternatively, the committee member may participate via electronic media. Should a committee member simply fail to attend the examination with no alternative arrangements, the examination can proceed. However, in that event, all attending committee members must approve the final examination in order for the candidate to pass the final examination.

## **Final Revisions to the Dissertation**

Before the committee adjourns, the committee must agree to any final revisions as well as which members of the committee will be required to judge whether or not the revisions are adequate. All substantive revisions will be discussed with the candidate in the presence of the examining committee. Further, the required revisions that are agreed upon by the examination committee must be specified clearly and fully in writing on the **Final Revisions Form**, while the committee members are still assembled.

## **Depositing the Dissertation; Graduation**

Dissertations must be deposited according to the University's rules and this must be done **approximately a month before commencement** exercises. Note that a **Human Participants Certification** form, signed by the Provost, must be deposited at the Graduate Center upon completion of the dissertation. Consult the **Graduate Center Student Handbook** for details. See: [http://www.gc.cuny.edu/CUNY\\_GC/media/CUNY-Graduate-Center/PDF/Programs/Chemistry/Student%20Handbook/Instructions-for-Human-Participants-Form.pdf](http://www.gc.cuny.edu/CUNY_GC/media/CUNY-Graduate-Center/PDF/Programs/Chemistry/Student%20Handbook/Instructions-for-Human-Participants-Form.pdf)