

M.A. EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Graduate Student Handbook Academic Year 2023-2024



Psychology Department

Middle Tennessee State University

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Overview

About this Handbook

Welcome to Middle Tennessee State University! This handbook provides a convenient source of information about the College of Graduate studies and the Experimental Psychology program rules, procedures, services, and facilities, as well as general advice for a successful experience while in the program. Where relevant, hyperlinks to resources beyond this document are also provided. It is recommended that you consult this handbook before you first meet with your advisor.

The student handbook is updated every year. However, the information contained herein is for information purposes only and is subject to change without notice. For the most current information, please see the graduate catalog and official versions of these policies posted on the official university website.

Program Mission

The Experimental Psychology Program is designed to improve your professional and academic competitiveness by expanding your knowledge and skills in research methods and statistical analysis, as well as core principles of psychology. During your course of study, you will work closely with outstanding faculty with a wide range of expertise to actively engage in research using state-of-the-art facilities. You will have the opportunity to make significant research contributions to areas such as social psychology, learning and memory, developmental psychology, as well as cognitive neuroscience or psychopharmacology. Students can also specialize in behavior analysis and take the courses required to obtain certification as a board certified behavior analyst.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of a M.A in Experimental Psychology, graduates will be able to:

- demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in their concentration.
- understand and apply research methods, measurement, and testing in psychology, including research design, data analysis, administration, and interpretation.
- understand and apply psychological principles to personal, social, and organizational issues.
- weigh evidence, tolerate ambiguity, act ethically, and reflect other values that are the underpinning of psychology as a discipline.

Statement on Diversity Inclusions and Values

As members of the Psychology Department, we strive to cultivate an inclusive academic community that values diverse questions, viewpoints, and approaches, to promote and foster intellectual growth and creativity, and to challenge biases. We are committed to supporting and including students, faculty and staff from all backgrounds and groups, regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexuality, gender, age, ability, and culture.

We are working hard to support minority students through a number of diversity and inclusion initiatives (<https://www.mtsu.edu/psychology/includes/StatemntDivInclVal.php>).

Facilities and Resources

Psychology Department

Since summer 2020, the department is located into a new building with expanded laboratory facilities. Current research facilities include a well-equipped auditory localization lab configured for free field and psychophysical studies in audition; two labs equipped with multi-channel EEG systems; an eye-tracking lab; a sensory lab, an animal learning lab, and a pharmacology and optogenetics lab.

Computer software includes statistical software (SPSS and SAS) and software specific to the acquisition and analysis of human performance data (E-Prime, Matlab).

University Computer Labs

University computer labs are available at the following locations for all students, faculty and staff with a current MTSU ID:

- Business & Aerospace, S137 (<https://www.mtsu.edu/businesslab/about/index.php>)
- Kirskey Old Main, Multiple Labs (https://www.mtsu.edu/csc/lab_KOM.php)
- Walker Library, Multiple Labs (<https://library.mtsu.edu/technology/computers>)
- Student Union, 206

Adaptive Technology Computer Lab

The Adaptive Technology Center (ATC) is located on the first floor of Walker Library, room 174. They are a campus resource for students that are registered with MTSU's Disability & Access Center (DAC).

Margaret H. Ordoubadian University Writing Center

The University Writing Center assists writers of various experiences, backgrounds, and skill levels in developing responsible, informed writing practices. The Writing Center is a free tutoring service offered to all currently enrolled MTSU students, staffed by MTSU undergraduate and graduate students. We offer one-on-one support with brainstorming, outlining, formatting, organizing, revising, and editing, facilitating your growth as a writer and helping you reach your full potential as a writer (<https://www.mtsu.edu/writing-center>).

Program Faculty & Areas of Interest

Stuart E. Bernstein, Ph.D., Michigan State University, 1996.

ACB 357

615-898-5943

stuart.bernstein@mtsu.edu

Cognitive psychology, reading and spelling.

Michelle Boyer-Pennington, Ph.D., University of Florida, 1995.

ACB 363

615-898-5451

michelle.boyer-pennington@mtsu.edu

Child development, event memory in preschoolers.

Thomas M. Brinthaup, Ph.D., University of Pittsburgh, 1989.

ACB 155

615-898-2317

tom.brinthaup@mtsu.edu

Personality and individual differences, psychology of self and identity.

Teresa L. Davis, Ph.D., University of Florida, 1992.

ACB 365

615-898-5450

teresa.davis@mtsu.edu

Child development, social cognitive development.

Jessica Gaby, Ph.D., Cornell University, 2017.

ACB 335

615-898-5640

jessica.gaby@mtsu.edu

Human olfactory perception, social olfaction, psychophysics.

Jay E. Hinnenkamp, Ph.D., Utah State University 2020.

ACB 385

615-898-8873

jay.hinnenkamp@mtsu.edu

Quantitative models of choice and learning, behavior analysis, conditioned reinforcement.

James Houston, Ph.D., University of Akron, 2016.

ACB 359

615-898-5641

james.houston@mtsu.edu

Cognitive neuroscience, cognitive and affective aging, Chiari malformation syndrome.

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William Langston, Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1994.

ACB 151

615-898-5489

william.langston@mtsu.edu

Psychology of belief.

Cyrille L. Magne, Ph.D., University of Paul Cézanne, Marseille, France, 2005.

ACB 367

615-898-5599

cyrille.magne@mtsu.edu

Cognitive neuroscience, neurobiology of language, link between music and language abilities.

John Pennington, Ph.D., University of Florida, 1994.

ACB 387

615-898-5937

john.pennington@mtsu.edu

Social/personality, food marketing, taste perception, social media-based persuasion.

Tiffany Rogers, Ph.D., University of Memphis, 2012.

ACB 381

615-904-8446

tiffany.rogers@mtsu.edu

Neuroscience, psychopharmacology, social behavior (mouse models).

Greg W. Schmidt, Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles, 1988.

ACB 240H

615-898-2729

greg.schmidt@mtsu.edu

Social, close relationships, attribution.

Megan Zeringue, Ph.D., University of New Orleans, 2019.

ACB 334

615-898-5027

megan.zeringue@mtsu.edu

Child/adolescent sleep, parent-child relationships, socioeconomic disadvantage.

Advisors

You will be admitted to the experimental program by a faculty advisor based on your area of specialization and research interests. Advisors are an important reference source for completing the experimental program as well as for learning about research and the field of experimental psychology. It is also wise to talk with a number of faculty for advice throughout your time as a student to develop a fuller understanding of experimental psychology careers.

You may change advisors at any time, but you must make sure that both your former advisor and new advisor agree to the switch. You also must coordinate with your original advisor to transfer your file to your new advisor.

Your advisor must approve any course substitution. Be sure to complete a Revision Form to document any changes (<https://www.mtsu.edu/graduate/forms.php>).

Degree Requirements

Candidate must:

1. complete a total of 36 semester hours for the General Experimental track or 37 hours for the Behavior Analysis track, including at least 30 hours in graduate psychology courses (see curriculum below). Only 30 percent of the total number of hours may be dually listed (5000 level meeting in conjunction with 4000 or 3000 level).
2. pass a written comprehensive examination prepared by the faculty in the student's concentration (may be taken no more than twice);
3. successfully write and orally present a written thesis evaluated by a committee of psychology faculty.
4. be able to meet the demands required for professional work in psychology. Therefore, students may be subject to dismissal from the Psychology Department if they (a) commit a serious breach of ethics or gross professional negligence or (b) present evidence of impaired psychological functioning that would present a danger to themselves or others in a professional role. Students who are dismissed may reapply and will be considered for readmission on a competitive basis. Students who reapply may be asked to provide evidence of improved ability to meet performance requirements.

Curriculum

Track 1: General Experimental	Hrs	Track 2: Behavior Analysis	Hrs
<i>Research Methods and Statistics</i>			
PSY 5080 Advanced Research Methods	3	PSY 6500 BA Methodology	3
PSY 6280 Psychological Statistics: Regression	3	Choose one	3
PSY 6290 Psychological Statistics: ANOVA	3		
<i>Core Courses</i>			
PSY 5240 Behavioral Neuroscience	3	Choose one	3
PSY 6190 Advanced Cognitive Psychology	3		
PSY 6810 Lit Review/Reading in Psychology: Social or PSY 6020 Theories of Personality	3		
PSY 6120 (Child) or PSY 6130 (Adolescent) or PSY 6410 (Lifespan) Developmental Psychology	3	PSY 6120 (Child) or PSY 6130 (Adolescent) or PSY 6410 (Lifespan) Developmental Psychology	3
		PSY 6875 Principles of Behavior Analysis	3
		PSY 5480 Learning Theories	3
<i>Specialty Courses</i>			
PSY Electives	3	PSY 6440 Advanced Applied Behavioral Analysis	3
PSY Electives	3	PSY 5430 Ethical Conduct in Behavior Analysis	3
Literature Review (see options below)	3	PSY 6720 Lit Review/Reading in Psychology: Learning	1
		PSY 6545 Systems Level Behavior Analysis	3
		PSY 6445 Skills Assessment and Methods in Applied Behavior Analysis	3
<i>Research Experience</i>			
PSY 6600 Independent Research in Psychology: General and Experimental	3	PSY 6600 Independent Research in Psychology: General and Experimental	3
PSY 6640 Thesis Research	3	PSY 6640 Thesis Research	3
Total	36	Total	37

Literature Review

You must choose the course(s) in consultation with your advisor.

Number	Title	Credits	Offering
PSY 6590	Literature Review and Reading in Psychology: General and Experimental	1 to 3	TBD with advisor
PSY 6660	Literature Review and Reading in Psychology: Quantitative	1 to 3	TBD with advisor
PSY 6670	Literature Review and Reading in Psychology: Behavioral Neuroscience	1 to 3	TBD with advisor
PSY 6680	Literature Review and Reading in Psychology: Cognitive	1 to 3	TBD with advisor
PSY 6700	Literature Review and Reading in Psychology: Developmental	1 to 3	TBD with advisor
PSY 6720	Literature Review and Reading in Psychology: Learning	1 to 3	TBD with advisor
PSY 6730	Literature Review and Reading in Psychology: Personality	1 to 3	TBD with advisor
PSY 6740	Literature Review and Reading in Psychology: Reading	1 to 3	TBD with advisor
PSY 6790	Literature Review and Reading in Psychology: Sensation and Perception	1 to 3	TBD with advisor
PSY 6810	Literature Review and Reading in Psychology: Social	1 to 3	TBD with advisor

Recommended Course Sequence

A highly recommended sequence of courses has been developed, but a different sequence may be recommended on a case-by-case basis (for example, if you are part-time or have numerous prerequisites). Some courses are prerequisites for other courses and should be taken early in your program of study. Your advisor will be able to help you develop your plan of study.

Graduate statistics courses should be taken in your first year to aid in your understanding of advanced topics and to assist you in designing and completing your thesis. It is recommended

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that you maintain notebooks and retain textbooks from all of your required classes, including the statistics courses, to aid you in studying for the comprehensive exam and as the beginning of your professional library.

Please note that not all courses are offered every semester, or every year. Choose your courses depending on when you start and when the required and elective courses will be offered during your enrollment in the program. The following guide will help you complete your studies in a logical order and timely fashion.

Track 1: General Experimental			
Fall Year 1	Spring Year 1	Fall Year 2	Spring Year 2
PSY 6190	Developmental	Elective (3 hours)	Elective (3 hours)
PSY 6280	PSY 6290	Literature Review	Thesis (3 hours)
PSY 5240 or PSY 6020	PSY 5080	PSY 5240 or PSY 6020	
PSY 6600 (1 hour)	PSY 6600 (1 hour)	PSY 6600 (1 hour)	

Track 2: Behavior Analysis				
Fall Year 1	Spring Year 1	Summer Year 1	Fall Year 2	Spring Year 2
PSY 6875	PSY 5480	PSY 6440	PSY 6445	PSY 6545
PSY 6500	PSY 5430	Core Course	PSY 6600	PSY 6720
Core Course	Core Course		Core Course	Thesis (2 hours)
			Thesis (1 hour)	

Comprehensive Examination

Comprehensive exams are taken near the end of your program of study. They consist of two parts: one focusing on course work, and one focusing on research methods and statistical interpretation.

Structure of the Examination

The structure provided below is only for Track 1 (General Experimental). For the Behavior Analysis Specialization, please contact your advisor.

Course Work

The Course Work section of the exam is designed to test your mastery of the four core areas of Experimental Psychology:

1. Neuroscience
2. Social Psychology
3. Developmental Psychology
4. Cognitive Psychology

A list of potential questions for each area can be obtained from the Coordinator of the Experimental Psychology program. While this section of the exam includes one question from each of the four core areas, you only need to pick three to answer. The questions will be selected from the list of questions provided to you by the coordinator. Please note that the goal of the exam is to test these core areas and not necessarily the specific content of the courses you took as a graduate student.

Research Methods and Statistics

The Methods/Statistics section is designed to test your understanding of research methodology and associated statistical analyses appropriate for various methods. While example questions from past exams can be obtained from the Coordinator, the actual exam will include a new question.

Registering for Comps

We suggest that you do not wait until your last semester to take comps. The deadline for registration is two weeks before the scheduled date for comps. The deadline for registration is posted on the department website at:

<https://www.mtsu.edu/psychology/grad/masterexam.php>

You must notify the department secretary coordinating comps (Karen Nunley, karen.nunley@mtsu.edu, 615-898-5192) and register online at the link provided on the Psychology Department website:

https://www.mtsu.edu/psychology/grad/masterexam_reg.php

Please note that you must still meet with the area coordinator to discuss your exam.

Preparing for Comps

Contact the Coordinator of the Experimental Program for details concerning your exam. It is advised that you do this the first week of the term during which you plan to take the exam. It is also strongly suggested that you then contact the authors of each exam questions for guidance on how to best prepare for each section.

Administration & Evaluation of Comps

Comps are administered on a Friday or Saturday, usually around the last week of March during the spring semester, and the last week of October for the fall semester. No Comps are administered during summer. Comps are graded on a Pass/Fail basis. In order to pass, you must score at least a 70% on each of the two sections described above (Course Work, Research Methods and Statistics). It generally takes around two weeks for your grade to be reported. The length of time between taking your Comps and receiving your grade will vary, however, according to how many students take Comps and how many readers are involved in grading them.

If you fail your comprehensive exams, you may take the test one more time. If you only failed one of the two sections of comps (Course Work, Research Methods and Statistics), you will be retested only on the failed section. If you fail a second time, you may appeal the decision, but it is possible that you may not receive your degree.

If you have a disability that may require assistance or accommodation, you need to contact the comps coordinator when you sign up for comps. The comps coordinator will require a letter from the Office of Disabled Students Services (615-898-2783) verifying the disability and addressing the accommodation that needs to be made.

Thesis

About Your Thesis

A thesis is a research project that you develop, implement, and write using the format of a standard empirical research study in psychology. It involves a literature review, a statement of hypotheses, use of standardized psychological tests or other measuring instruments, statistical analyses of the data, interpreting the results in light of the existing literature and writing your conclusions. The thesis must be written in APA style.

Deciding on a topic for your thesis can be done by researching areas you are interested in at the library. You can make the final decision with your advisor. Your thesis may grow out of research you are conducting with your advisor.

You sign up for variable credit (1-6 hours) when registering for thesis (PSY 6640). You must enroll for at least 1 credit hour of thesis each semester from the time you begin working on the proposal until you finish. You will receive either an "S" (satisfactory) or a "U" (unsatisfactory) grade for each semester you are registered. Keep in mind that it will probably take at least one calendar year to complete your thesis. You need 3 hours with an "S" to complete your thesis. Consult with your advisor before registering for thesis credits.

A few times each semester the Records Office sends out class rolls to each instructor requiring that they identify students who are not actually attending courses for which they are enrolled. For financial aid purposes, it is important that you are putting in a commensurate amount of effort for the number of thesis credits for which you are enrolled. If you sign up for thesis credits and do not meet with your advisor and/or do not put in the required amount of work, not only may you receive a "U" for thesis, but this may have negative implications for your financial aid. We urge you to consult with your Thesis Advisor about their expectations for the number of hours you need to work on your thesis each week.

Thesis Timeline

The time needed to complete a thesis and each of its parts will vary depending on the complexity of the study, the form of data collection, and other variables. Plan on about one year of work.

All students are required to submit an Intent to Graduate Form during the first two weeks of the semester they plan to graduate. Submitting this form initiates the degree checkout process, including verification of the completion of degree requirements. If the form is submitted after the deadline, the degree may still be conferred, but students may be unable to participate in commencement ceremonies or be published in the commencement program. The form can be found at: <https://www.mtsu.edu/graduate/forms.php> (Scroll down to Graduation Forms and select Intent to Graduate).

Thesis Committee & Selection

You must select a Thesis Committee which consists of a Thesis Advisor (who will also serve as Chair of your Committee), a Committee Member, and a Critical Reader. Your Committee can be made up of anyone on the psychology faculty, but either the Advisor or the Committee Member must be a core Experimental Faculty Member. The Thesis Advisor is the person with whom you will work most closely. This person should have an interest in your topic and will give you direction and guidance from your thesis' inception to its final approval. The Committee Member also should have some interest in your topic but is not as involved in the process as the Thesis Advisor. This person also provides advice and suggestions from beginning to end. The Critical Reader only makes suggestions for revisions or changes on the proposal and is no longer involved once the proposal is approved. It is important to choose faculty for your committee with whom you can work easily, and who are knowledgeable about your topic.

Thesis Proposal

Plan on at least one semester for completing the proposal process. Although there are no formal deadlines for submitting a proposal, there are several factors to consider:

- You will likely need approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before starting your research. During the regular academic year, expedited reviews generally are completed three to four weeks after submission. Proposals for full review are considered once a month. Obtaining IRB approval is also less predictable in the summer and will generally take longer (no full review is considered during the summer). In addition, if you are conducting research at another institution, that institution also will have to give approval. You need to take into account that each place has its own procedures and time for approval may vary.
- Proposals are due to your Thesis Committee at least two weeks before the proposal defense. Consult with your Thesis Chair and Committee to find out the exact dates for the semester for which you want to submit your proposal. It is best to have your proposal reviewed during the regular academic year because faculty members have varying schedules in the summer and take their vacations at different times. Additionally, some faculty members are generally not on campus during the summer.
- Committees do not always approve a proposal at the first meeting.

Thesis Defense

Once you have completed your thesis, the final step is to present it at a meeting of your Thesis Committee. The presentation is open to all interested faculty and students, but usually the presenter, Thesis Advisor, and Committee Member(s) are the main people present.

The thesis needs to go to your Thesis Committee at least two weeks before the scheduled defense. Please keep in mind that your committee may (most likely will) require changes in your thesis. These changes will have to be made and approved by your committee before the thesis can be submitted to Graduate Studies by the due date. So do not wait until the last minute to schedule your defense.

Completion of Thesis

Dates for the thesis to be submitted to the College of Graduate Studies vary from semester to semester. Please consult the graduate academic calendar for the exact dates (<https://www.mtsu.edu/graduate/student/calendar.php>). Generally the dates are:

- Fall: middle - late October
- Spring: middle - late March
- Summer: middle June

After defending your thesis and approval from your committee, there are several steps that must be completed before you can submit your thesis manuscript to Graduate Studies:

- First, you need to pay the thesis binding fees on the online portal: https://secure.touchnet.com/C20134_ustores/web/store_main.jsp?STOREID=2&SINGLESTORE=true and complete the Thesis Binding Form: <http://mtsu.edu/psychology/docs/grad/ThesisBinding.pdf>
- Then forward the confirmation receipt of payment and completed Thesis Binding Form to CoTonya Malone via email (Cotonya.Malone@mtsu.edu).
- Get Thesis Approval Form completed by your Committee and Department Chair using the dynamic form found at: <https://www.mtsu.edu/graduate/forms.php> (Scroll down to Thesis & Dissertation Forms and select Thesis/Dissertation Approval Page).

Now you can submit your thesis to Graduate Studies electronically via ProQuest. Instructions and ProQuest direct link can be found at <https://www.mtsu.edu/graduate/student/thesis.php>.

All students submitting a thesis or dissertation must also submit a Publishing Agreement, which grants MTSU the non-exclusive right to archive, preserve, and make accessible their publication. You must file this form when you submit your thesis or dissertation to ProQuest, and it must be on file before your degree can be conferred. The form is accessible at: <https://www.mtsu.edu/graduate/forms.php> (Scroll down to Thesis & Dissertation Forms and select Publishing Agreement).

Once Graduate Studies emails you the final approval, email a pdf version of your thesis to CoTonya Malone (Cotonya.Malone@mtsu.edu) and let her know where you want your copy(s) mailed to. Once she receives the bound copies, she will give a copy to your Thesis Advisor and mail you the remaining copy(s).

Suggested Procedure for the Thesis

At every stage, consult with your Thesis Advisor, and if necessary, your committee.

1. Select a topic and find a Thesis Advisor who will work with you.
2. Select a Committee Member and Critical Reader.
3. Do a comprehensive and exhaustive literature review of your topic.

4. Decide on a hypothesis or hypotheses to test.
5. Create a study to test your hypothesis(es).
6. Write your proposal.
7. Submit it to your Thesis Advisor for review.
8. Make changes (repeat as often as necessary).
9. Submit your proposal to your Thesis Committee once approved by your Thesis Advisor.
10. Set up a meeting with your Thesis Committee to get their comments and decision on approval of your proposal.
11. Make changes (repeat as often as necessary).
12. Once your proposal is approved, have your Committee sign the Thesis Proposal Approval Form.
13. Request approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before starting your study.
14. Submit Thesis Proposal Approval Form and IRB Approval Letter to Department Chair.
15. Once you have successfully completed the above steps, you may start conducting your study and gather data.
16. Analyze the data.
17. Write up the results and discussion.
18. Submit completed thesis for review to Thesis Advisor.
19. Make changes (repeat as often as necessary).
20. With Thesis Advisor approval, submit completed thesis to Thesis Committee for review.
21. Schedule thesis defense with your Thesis Committee to get their comments and decision on approval of your thesis.
22. Make required changes (repeat as often as necessary).
23. Once your thesis is approved, pay the binding fee.
24. Forward confirmation receipt of payment and completed Binding Fee Form to Department Main Office.
25. Submit Dynamic Thesis Approval Form to Thesis Committee and Department Chair.
26. Submit thesis to Graduate Studies via ProQuest by due date for thesis submission as given in the MTSU Graduate Academic Calendar.
27. Make any changes required by Graduate Studies before due date in academic calendar.

Questions About Your Thesis

1. *Is any financial assistance available for my thesis?*

While there may be resources available for you to help with the cost of tuition and fees, there is no funding available at MTSU for helping with the costs of your thesis research. You must provide for these costs on your own. You might be able, however, to get private foundations to help you. Explore these options with your advisor or other faculty.

2. *Is there travel money available if I present my thesis at a conference?*

The Dean of the College of Graduate Studies, upon recommendation of the Graduate Council, will award grants of up to \$500.00 to graduate students for travel related to presentation of research and creative scholarship at major conferences and venues. Applicants should make a case for need, and present evidence of acceptance of proposals

for presentation. Priority funding will go first to graduate students presenting results of research or creative scholarship as either the sole author or the primary author(s) of a multiple authorship work. The applicant must be currently enrolled during the semester of travel. The Student Affairs and Travel Sub-Committee of the Graduate Council will consider applications shortly after receipt and awards will be made until existing funds for the semester are exhausted. The Travel Application Form can be directly downloaded from <https://www.mtsu.edu/graduate/pdf/StuTravelAppl.pdf>.

3. *Where can I get statistical help for my thesis?*

Ask your Committee Members or your Thesis Advisor for suggestions on how to get help.

4. *Where can I see completed thesis?*

The MTSU Library has a collection of theses authored by MTSU students (available at <http://jewlscholar.mtsu.edu/handle/mtsu/3>). Additionally, your Thesis Advisor or Academic Advisor may have a collection of theses by students whom they supervised.

Re-enrollment and Leave of Absence

Once admitted to the Experimental Program, a student must enroll every semester (excluding summers). If a leave of absence is necessary, consult with your advisor and submit a written request for a leave of absence to the program coordinator. This leave must be approved by the experimental program prior to the leave. If a student has broken continuous enrollment (i.e., not enrolled in a fall or spring semester), the student must apply to be readmitted to the experimental program. If a student had requested and had been granted a leave of absence, the student must write a letter to the experimental coordinator requesting readmission at least 30 days prior to the semester in which the student wishes to re-enroll. If the student had not been granted a leave of absence, the student must make the request for readmission by April 15 for enrollment in the summer or fall semester and by November 15 for enrollment in the spring semester. Readmission to the graduate college is not automatically granted.

How to Pay for Graduate School

Financial Aid

Once you have applied for your chosen graduate program, your next step will be to complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). A FAFSA may be submitted at any time; you do not need to wait for your MTSU admission decision. The FAFSA must be completed each year in order to receive federal financial aid. If you are an incoming student, do this as your first financial aid step. Once you are admitted, you will receive emails from the MTSU Financial Aid Office to your MTmail account when it is time to reapply. Information on how to complete a FAFSA may be found on the College of Graduate Studies website (<https://mtsu.edu/financial-aid/graduate.php>) or through the Federal FAFSA website (<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa/filling-out/fsaid>).

MTSU Scholarships

There are several scholarships available for graduate students through the College of Graduate Studies. You will find information and guidelines for each scholarship at <https://www.mtsu.edu/graduate/funding.php>.

Academic Common Market

The Academic Common Market allows out-of-state students who are admitted to approved academic programs to pay in-state tuition while attending MTSU. The list of programs available through the ACM is updated by higher education representatives from participating states and is periodically subject to change. For current information of the Academic Common Market please visit: <http://www.mtsu.edu/acm/>.

Graduate Assistantship

Each year, the Department of Psychology employs graduate assistants. These graduate students assist faculty members with both teaching and research. Graduate assistants perform a wide variety of duties, depending on faculty needs and on the assistant's skills and background. Graduate assistants cover classes for absent professors; show videos to classes; monitor tests; grade homework and tests; enter, code, and analyze data; test participants in experiments; tutor students; score measures of psychological assessment; keep track of departmental test kits; conduct library searches; assist in teaching laboratory sections of classes; etc. No one graduate assistant is expected to be able to perform all of these duties.

The Graduate Studies Committee in the Psychology Department selects graduate assistants from a pool of applicants each spring and fall. Students are not automatically considered for an assistantship. Students must complete a graduate assistantship application, a FAFSA application, and all materials required by their graduate program to be considered for an assistantship.

Obtaining a graduate assistantship in the Psychology Department is a very competitive process. Not everyone who is accepted into the program and applies for a graduate assistantship will receive one. Factors such as letters of reference, relevant research experience, GRE scores, college GPA, and specific skills are taken into consideration when selecting graduate assistants. With the approval of the Department Chair, the selected students begin their assistantships the following fall or spring semester.

Graduate assistants are evaluated each semester by the faculty members to which they are assigned and by the Graduate Studies Committee. If these evaluations are favorable (and if positions continue to be available), graduate assistants may serve in the department for up to 4 semesters (2 years).

Application materials are due by:

- March 1 (Fall semester)
- October 1 (Spring semester)

Please complete and submit the following by the deadline date. Students seeking graduate assistantship should complete the following items:

- The FAFSA Application for Federal Student Aid (<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>).
- The online Graduate Assistantship Application (located at <https://www.mtsu.edu/graduate/funding.php>, under Graduate Assistantships). *Please be sure to include a current telephone number and your preferred email address on this form.*
- You must submit all materials required for your graduate program application by the deadline.

Selected students will be notified by the Department. Questions about the status of your application should be directed to Kelly Grago at 615-898-5627 or by email Kelly.Grago@mtsu.edu.

Employment Opportunities

MTSU holds many employment opportunities across campus. If you are looking for a Graduate Assistantship position, begin your inquiry by speaking with your graduate advisor or program director to see what is available in your field of study. If there are no available positions in your program, browse through the list of potential openings provided on the College of Graduate Studies website (<https://www.mtsu.edu/graduate/funding.php>) and see if you meet the necessary employment qualifications.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. Students need to be aware that FERPA allows faculty to communicate with each other within the program and within the department (including faculty to Department Chair). “Additionally, and under FERPA, disclosure of information from a student’s educational record is permissible without the student’s written consent if the disclosure is by school officials who have a legitimate educational interest”. This can include information about a student’s (lack of) professional behavior in a class or other professional setting outside of their specific concentration.

You can find more information about FERPA on the Department of Education website:

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

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