**Guidelines for Completing a Thesis in Psychology (PSY 498/499)**

**rev 2.19.2021**

The Psychology Thesis is intended for the serious psychology student who is seeking challenging research training and the opportunity for individual mentoring by a faculty member. Students must write up and propose their research project to a committee of three faculty members, conduct the research investigation, give a poster presentation on their work, and successfully defend the thesis before the faculty committee. Students completing the two-semester thesis sequence receive essential preparation skills for graduate study in psychology and related fields, as well as their future careers. In addition, the experience gained by Psychology students can be extremely beneficial in giving them an advantage with future career plans, whether they opt to seek employment immediately after graduation or to pursue graduate school.

**Benefits of completing a Psychology Thesis**

* Completing a thesis shows you are committed to the field and really helps with gaining better understanding of where your professional passions may be.
* Entry to graduate and professional programs is competitive. Completing a two-semester thesis project is a way you can distinguish yourself. Further, engaging with your faculty advisor on a thesis project often leads to a strong, more effective letter of recommendation from your faculty research advisor.
* Students pursuing a degree in Psychology are better known by the faculty, offering additional personalized experiences and learning.
* The individual research project gives you a solid background in research methodology, which is important for graduate school admission to both clinical and research-oriented programs. It will help you to develop strong time management skills.
* You will have the opportunity to present study at a conference and possibly publish your results.
* You can participate in the University’s Three-Minute Thesis competition.

**Student and Faculty Expectations**

The Thesis consists of an independent research project spanning two semesters and is typically completed during the senior year. The student will choose a faculty member who ultimately will serve as the research advisor for the student’s Thesis. We strongly recommend that students interested in completing a thesis begin exploring faculty research interests and reading their research to learn more about the kind of work in which they engage. Faculty research interests are listed on the [faculty](https://www.umassd.edu/cas/psychology/faculty/) section of psychology department webpage.

Students are encouraged to try working in a Psychology faculty member(s) research lab(s), whether on a voluntary basis or for independent study credit, during their sophomore and junior years. If a student has difficulty identifying a faculty advisor, please reach out to the Thesis Program Director (Elizabeth Richardson; erichardson@umassd.edu) for assistance.

Application for completion of a thesis is typically submitted during the end of the student’s junior year. The student and faculty member should meet during the spring semester of the student’s junior year in order to initially develop an informal arrangement for supervision of the student’s research. This will become formalized when the student registers for three credits of PSY 498 Thesis research (typically taken in the Fall of senior year) and then continues with three credits of PSY 499 Thesis research (typically Spring of senior year). Registration forms are available on the Psychology Department webpage. Specific expectations and requirements are outlined below.

**Student Expectations**

The Thesis must be a scholarly endeavor that makes a contribution to the body of knowledge in psychology. This typically will include a review of extant literature, a detailed description of the methods and procedures, analysis of results, and a discussion relating the findings to the broader literature and field of psychology. The length of the thesis commonly ranges from 20-50 pages, depending on the scope of the project, number of references, figures and tables, and appendices (e.g., research instruments, qualitative interview questions, lab protocols).

Students will work in collaboration with their faculty research advisor to develop a research project that is both inherently interesting to student and faculty, as well as realistic to complete within the allotted timeframe. The Thesis is not required to be of publishable quality, although publication or presentation of the results to the scientific community is a desirable goal. It is important that students take an active role in communicating with their faculty advisor about what is expected in the thesis research in order to avoid misunderstandings at later dates.

At the end of the PSY 498 semester, students will be expected to successfully complete a thesis proposal meeting with their selected thesis committee before proceeding to PSY 499. At the end of the PSY 499 semester, students will be expected to successfully defend their thesis project before their committee and will also be expected to complete a poster that will be presented at the bi-annual Psychology research conference, and any other research conference identified by student and faculty research advisor. Details are provided below regarding a suggested timeline for completion.

**Faculty Expectations**

Faculty who agree to serve as research advisor for Thesis research take on some of the responsibility for ensuring that the student completes graduation requirements and all tasks necessary for the successful completion of the thesis. It is expected that the faculty advisor will make him/herself available to the student on a regular, reliable basis and that his or her work with the student ultimately benefits the student’s undergraduate educational experience.

The Thesis research project is expected to be of high quality but also manageable proportions. The usual time commitment for an Thesis project is about 10 hours a week for two semesters. Ideally, the scope of the project is consistent with this expectation so that students can graduate in May.

Faculty should make every effort to clearly outline with the student what their expectations are for the Thesis research. Faculty may have different working models of what an Thesis should be, based upon their own working style, the type of research, and the student’s abilities and skills. Early communication with the student about these expectations is critical. Students typically are unclear about what a Thesis involves, and what a faculty member may wish to see in the student’s work may not be self-evident to students unless these expectations are made explicit. For instance, faculty need to consider when they will hold regular meetings with the student, and if they have preferred methods and times for communication (e.g., face-to-face appointment, email, text, Zoom or Skype appointments).

While students are responsible for ensuring that they acquire and complete all necessary forms with signatures, it is helpful for faculty research advisors to be aware of the paperwork requirements. Forms can be obtained on the Psychology Department webpage.

Faculty are also strongly encouraged to establish a detailed timeline with each of their thesis students. Faculty should inform students if they will be on sabbatical, on vacation or away at a conference, or otherwise unavailable during any part of a semester (note that if a faculty member will be unavailable for extensive periods they should not take on the commitment to supervise an Thesis). Below, please find an example timeline of tasks to be included for both semesters of the Thesis. This can be modified as needed, but a pre-established timeline discussion with the student ensures that both student and faculty are clear on what is expected of each of them. Another example of a thesis contract, with a fillable table is offered as a helpful resources on the Psychology Department website (**Sample Thesis Contract**).

***Sample PSY 498 semester timeline [Typically Fall of Senior Year]:***

Sept. 30: review existing relevant literature and develop draft of study hypotheses

Oct. 15: detailed outline of Introduction section

Oct. 30: full draft of Introduction section; outline of study methods and plan for statistical analyses

Nov. 15: full draft of study methods, plan for statistical analyses, and study hypotheses

Nov. 30: submit completed full draft of Introduction, Methods, Study Aims/Hypotheses and Proposed Analyses to faculty research advisor

Dec. 7: prepare all necessary IRB paperwork

Dec. 15: thesis proposal meeting with committee (committee members must receive full thesis proposal one week before meeting). ***Important note: Students will receive an IP grade for PSY 498 until they have successfully proposed their thesis and submitted their signed* PSY 498 Thesis Approval Form*. Once this has been completed, the student will receive their final grade for PSY 498 and will then be enrolled in PSY 499.***

Dec. 20: upon committee approval of study proposal, study materials must be submitted for IRB review (Note: all studies must be submitted for IRB review only after they have been approved by the research thesis committee).

***Sample PSY 499 semester timeline [Typically Spring of Senior Year]:***

Jan. 30: all study materials to be prepared and ready for administration

Feb. 7: assuming approval by IRB, begin study recruitment and implementation

March 21: tentative completion of study implementation

Withdrawal date: Particular attention must be paid to the Withdrawal date listed in the Academic Calendar for that particular semester. Students and faculty must assess if the project is possible to complete. ***Important note: Students who remain in 499 past this date must either complete the thesis, take an incomplete that will delay graduation until complete, or receive an F for the course.***

March 31: all data entered/downloaded and cleaned

April 12: analyses completed and Results section drafted

April 19: Complete draft of thesis (Title Page, Abstract, Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, and accompanying tables/figures) drafted and submitted to faculty research advisor

May 3: Complete thesis distributed to committee members at least one week before meeting

May 10: thesis defense meeting with committee; accompanying paper to be prepared and signed upon successful defense of thesis project.

**The Thesis in Psychology**

The only acceptable Thesis in psychology consists of an empirical investigation (whether qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods) of a topic relevant to the science of behavior. Portfolios are not acceptable. The thesis should generally follow the structure of a published article, containing an introduction and review of the literature, statement of the study aims and hypotheses, method, results, and discussion. Acceptable lengths vary from 20-50 pages, including relevant appendices and references.

 **Selecting a Research Advisor and a Research Thesis Committee**. Students can find research advisors and research thesis committees in multiple ways. They may have taken a course or two with a particular faculty member whose research is particularly interesting and in line with their own interests. Alternatively, they may have served as a research assistant for a professor whose work is of interest to the student. The student’s faculty research advisor will ultimately be the best source to provide the student with suggestions for the remaining committee members, consisting of a total of three faculty members, at least two of which need to be faculty within the Psychology department.

**Selecting a Topic.** The topic of the thesis is usually decided on a mutual basis by the student and faculty research advisor. The topic should not be so narrow that there is little relevant literature to review, nor should it be so broad that it is poorly defined or cannot be completed within the span of a year. Importantly, the topic should be one that is interesting enough to the student that they are motivated to put in many months of work to see it through to successful completion. Generally, students who have worked with their faculty advisor previously have worked toward some topic possibilities

**Registration and Expectations for Thesis Courses.** Pre-requisites for registering for PSY 498 include: junior (or above) standing; Psychology major. Ideally, the student and potential faculty research advisor will begin a series of conversations about a potential thesis project during the spring of the student’s junior year. In addition to discussing what the study might consist of, conversation should include discussion of what is expected of student and faculty member. This will become formalized when the student completes the **Thesis Proposal Form and Semester Plan for PSY 498** (see below) and submits this to their faculty advisor for their signature. The faculty advisor will then be responsible for submitting this form to the department Thesis director (Elizabeth Richardson; erichardson@umassd.edu), who will then submit to the department chair and CAS Dean for their signatures. Once the final signature is obtained, the CAS Dean’s office will forward this paperwork to the Registrar’s Office for a 3-credit section of PSY 498 to be established for the student. Please note these additional considerations regarding PSY 498 registration:

* PSY 498/499 does *not* fulfill the Capstone Experience requirement, nor does it satisfy university studies requirements. This two-semester thesis sequence does, however, satisfy the requirement for two additional 300-400 level courses in Psychology.
* To receive a passing grade in PSY 498, the student must successfully complete their thesis proposal meeting and all faculty committee members must approve and sign the **PSY 498 Thesis Approval Form** (see below) prepared by the student. *Please note that this serves as a contract between student and the committee, with the expectation that the student will complete evaluation of the proposed aims and hypotheses.* See attached form.
* Should the student not successfully propose their thesis by the end of that semester, an Incomplete grade will be assigned until the thesis proposal has occurred, at which time a change of grade form will be submitted by the faculty advisor. Incomplete grades will be converted to a failing grade if the thesis proposal is not completed within one year of the incomplete grade being assigned. Please note, withdrawals are not possible after the end of the semester in which the student first enrolls in PSY 498. Once past that point, students must complete the course or take a F as a final grade.
* Should the student not successfully propose their thesis by the end of that semester, an incomplete grade will be assigned until the thesis has been defended before committee and the **PSY 498 Thesis Approval Form** (see below) signed. A change of grade form can then be submitted by the faculty advisor. Students CAN NOT enroll in PSY 499 until they have received a letter grade for PSY 498.
* Upon successful completion of PSY 498, students will submit the one-page summary of their thesis goals (PSY 498 Thesis Approval Form) with committee signatures in order to be enrolled in PSY 499. To receive a passing grade in PSY 499, the student must successfully complete their thesis defense meeting and all faculty committee members must provide approval.
* Please note, students who remain in 499 past the withdrawal date must either complete the thesis, take an incomplete that will delay graduation until complete, or receive an F for the course. Incomplete PSY 499 grades will be converted to a failing grade if the thesis is not defended within one year of the incomplete grade being assigned.

**The Thesis “Proposal” and “Defense”.** The Department of Psychology requires that students working on a Project successfully pass a thesis proposal meeting (culmination of PSY 498 semester) and a thesis defense meeting (culmination of PSY 499). The student is expected to provide an oral justification of the project to their research committee, which will include a short summary of the research itself, followed by a period of questioning and discussion with members of the committee. The purpose of the proposal is to have the student present their research project and carefully review the rationale for the work and study design. The purpose of the defense is to give the student a chance to show his or her familiarity with the topic of the research and to gather the committee together to share comments and suggestions.

At least two weeks prior to the thesis proposal/defense meeting, the student should give a final draft to the faculty research advisor. The advisor will carefully review this document, provide feedback, and once the advisor’s approval is obtained, the student should then distribute the final copy of the paper to be proposed/defended to the remaining committee members. Distribution of the paper to committee members must occur at least one week before the defense so that the research committee members have time to review the document before going into the meeting.

It is the student’s responsibility to prepare and distribute all materials electronically to the research committee and to arrange for the time and place of the upcoming proposal/defense meeting. The document must follow APA style, be neat and organized, and contain: title page, abstract, the body of the paper, and any appendices, such as measures. Once the student has arranged the date and time, a room must be reserved through the campus online system and faculty informed of the meeting location. While the thesis proposal meeting should involve only the student and faculty committee, the student may invite others to watch the thesis defense, such as research assistants who have helped with the project or friends who are interested and want to provide support.

For the proposal and defense meetings, students are expected to dress appropriately and conduct themselves in a professional way. This is a formal opportunity for the student to present him or herself in a professional manner that suggests how they may perform in future roles in graduate school or professional settings. This is valuable information that may be used in writing letters of recommendation on the student’s behalf. Students should work to communicate their points clearly and professionally, and respectfully address each committee member’s ideas and suggestions.

For the thesis proposal, students will want to prepare a brief (10-15 minute) presentation that outlines the key components of relevant background literature, specific aims and hypotheses of their own project, what they intend/have accomplished, and how this is relevant to existing literature and broader societal implications. For the thesis defense, students should spend more time on their study results and implications. Students are expected to respectfully address each committee member’s ideas and suggestions. While students are often anxious about this process, they should be encouraged to realize the benefits of this experience. They have the opportunity to discuss a topic that is close to their heart with faculty members who also care deeply about the topic. This commonly leads to wonderful, stimulating discussion and a chance to learn from one another.

At the conclusion of the thesis defense, students will be asked to leave the room while the committee deliberates on the quality of the project and makes decisions regarding recommendations for whether the project has been successfully completed. Usually these deliberations take only a few minutes, after which the student will be invited back into the room and the results of the committee’s decision shared with the student.

At the end of the thesis proposal and defense meetings, signatures from the committee should be obtained on the **PSY 498 Thesis Approval Form** (for thesis proposal) or **PSY 499 Thesis Completion Approval Form** (for thesis defense). Signatures may typically be obtained even if some minor revisions are required. If more than minor revisions are required, committee members may opt to sign this page after they have noted that revisions have been successfully made. Once all signatures have been obtained, the faculty research advisor will submit the grade for that semester.

**After the Defense.** From this point on, it is up to the student whether or not to do anything further with the thesis. The student may wish to meet further with the faculty advisor to discuss the possibility of continuing on the research in some form, or the possibility of publication. The following points are encouraged for discussion between student and faculty research advisor:

* If the student wishes to go on to graduate school and a professional career in psychology, publication of the thesis can be an important and valuable first step. Students should clarify authorship of any publication that results from the thesis research, as well as who would be responsible for what tasks in preparing for publication. Students should have opportunity to serve as first author on any manuscripts, posters, and other products resulting from their thesis.
* Students who fail to make progress on publication after two years default their rights to first authorship to the faculty member if the faculty member chooses to pursue publication
* Importantly, each student should provide a complete copy of their thesis data set and any supporting data to their faculty advisor. Students are responsible for reviewing the requirements of the IRB for data protection and storage and to discuss these steps with the faculty advisor to ensure best methods for data storage, protection, or destruction post study completion.

Finally, while there are many challenges to completing this two-semester sequence, most students who complete this feel that it was a positive, growth-stimulating experience. It is important to recognize the skills used throughout this process - resourcefulness, persistence, organization and maturity - in order to accomplish this goal!

**PSY 498 Thesis Proposal Form and Semester Plan**

**Department of Psychology (rev. 2.19.2021)**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Semester& Year: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Title of Thesis: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Please organize your PSY 498 semester plan using the following sub-headings. Consult your Faculty research advisor for guidance in writing your PSY 498 semester plan. Your faculty research advisor may request additional information or may require adjustments that reflect the professional standards within the department. *Once student and faculty are in agreement with the below and ready to provide signatures, the student should convert this form to pdf so that signatures can easily be added.*

1. Statement regarding the goal of the thesis or project

What do you intend to discover during your Thesis experience?

1. Key readings

List key items that you plan to review in preparation for your own work. Provide an annotated bibliography of at least three sources.

1. Communication

How often will you meet with your faculty research advisor? What are your advisor’s expectations of such meetings?

1. Specialized training

Does your proposed activity involve live humans or animals? If so, you will need to explore whether your project will need to be reviewed by the University’s human or animal research review board(s). Please indicate the status of your proposed work in this regard. Does your thesis require any additional specialized training (e.g., testing procedures, lab-safety instruction, survey techniques, Qualtrics)? Please specify the type of training required and when and from whom that training will be obtained.

1. Methods

In no more than 100 words, what do you intend to do to complete this project/thesis? Describe how you aim to explore your topic area.

1. Timeline

Based on the example provided in the *Guidelines for Completing a Thesis in Psychology*, provide key deadline dates and descriptions of key components of thesis project.

Student, please initial the following affirmations:

**\_\_** \_I affirm I will take/have taken the online course and exam and receive certification on “Training on the Protection of Human Subjects,” available online at <https://www.citiprogram.org> if my research involves human participants. Date completed within past three years:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
**\_\_\_** \_I affirm I will familiarize myself with the Ethical Principles for Research and Publication in the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct 2002, online at: <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx#8>

\_\_\_ I understand that if I do not withdraw from this course by the withdrawal date of the semester listed above, I must complete the coursework. While incompletes are an option for up to a year, there is no way to withdraw and thus could impact my ability to graduate if not completed.

I agree that I have discussed a plan of study with my faculty research advisor. I intend to fulfill these expectations.

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The above-named student and I have discussed and agreed upon expectations for both the responsibilities of the student and the supervisor.

Faculty research advisor: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Department thesis director: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Department chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

College of Arts and Sciences Dean \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**PSY 498 Thesis Approval Form**

**Department of Psychology (rev. 2.19.2021)**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Semester& Year: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Title of Thesis: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Please attach your committee-approved summary of thesis, consisting of:

* Study abstract
* Study justification
* List of study hypotheses

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Faculty research advisor: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Committee member: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Committee member: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Department thesis director: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Department chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

College of Arts and Sciences Dean \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Students cannot receive a final grade in PSY 498 and be enrolled in PSY 499 until this page is completed.

Student, please initial the following affirmations:

**\_\_** \_I affirm that I have taken the online course and exam and received certification on “Training on the Protection of Human Subjects,” available online at <https://www.citiprogram.org> if my research involves human participants. Date completed within past three years:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
**\_\_\_** \_I affirm that I have familiarized myself with the Ethical Principles for Research and Publication in the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct 2002, online at: <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx#8>

\_\_\_ I understand that if I do not withdraw from this course by the withdrawal date of the semester listed above, I must complete the coursework. While incompletes are an option for up to a year, there is no way to withdraw and thus could impact my ability to graduate if not completed.

I agree that I have discussed a plan of study with my faculty research advisor. I intend to fulfill these expectations.

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The above-named student and I have discussed and agreed upon expectations for both the responsibilities of the student and the supervisor.

Faculty research advisor: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**PSY 499 Thesis Completion Approval Form**

**Department of Psychology (rev. 2.19.2021)**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Semester& Year: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Title of Thesis: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Not Approved (needs significant revisions and a second defense meeting is

required)

\_\_\_ Approved with major revisions (final revisions to be reviewed by the committee, but a

second defense meeting is NOT required)

\_\_\_ Approved with minor revisions (final revisions to be reviewed by the advisor only)

Please attach a bullet point summary of the committee-approved revisions. Upon obtaining all signatures below, the faculty research advisor may then assign student’s grade for PSY 499.

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Faculty research advisor: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Committee member: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Committee member: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Department thesis director: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Department chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

College of Arts and Sciences Dean \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**PSY 498/498 Sample Thesis Contract (NOT required, offered only as example)**

Student Name:

Faculty Advisor:

Date:

**Overview and Responsibilities**

An undergraduate thesis should represent a significant piece of scholarship (broadly defined) that is couched within a field-specific framework. Although much of the onus of the thesis is on the student, the advisor plays a critical role in each stage of the process. Below are general guidelines outlining the general responsibilities of the student and advisor. There is also a template that can be used to develop a timeline.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Topic** | **Student’s Responsibilities** | **Advisor’s Responsibilities** |
| Topic Development and Methodology | Develop a focused, feasible, and worthwhile topic. This will involve several iterations and require the student to be flexible. | The advisor’s primary responsibility is to make sure the topic is feasible and that the project can be completed in a reasonable timeframe (usually 1 year). The advisor should assist in developing the theoretical framework and the methodological approach. |
| Choosing Committee | Do some preliminary work identifying potential committee members. This is most easily done by looking at the department website and exploring faculty interests. | Offer advice and recommendations for committee members. May be from within or outside of department (note that department rules may vary). |
| Creating and Adhering to a Timeline | Adhere to all deadlines. If the student cannot meet a deadline, the advisor should be notified in advance. The student need not seek perfection on early drafts!! | Set deadlines for various components of the project (e.g., annotated bibliography, outline, draft of lit review, etc). Make sure to keep in touch with the student to ensure deadlines are realistic. |
| Meetings | Be on time to all meetings with the advisor and the committee. The student should come prepared with questions, any drafts, and concerns. Let the advisor know in advance if you will be travelling or cannot meet. | Schedule regular meetings with your student (at least once every other week). Assist in setting up committee meetings and booking rooms. Give student guidance in terms of how you want him or her to prepare for the next meeting. |
| Advising/Communication | Use the advisor’s expertise. Ask your advisor about methodology, theoretical frameworks, and germinal work you should be citing. Respond to questions from your advisor promptly. | Respond to student questions in a timely manner! If you do not hear from your student, please make sure to reach out to make sure everything is still on track. |
| Drafts/Feedback | Submit sections or chapters as they are completed (on or before the deadline). Although the drafts will not be perfect, the student should spellcheck and re-read the document before submitting to catch any obvious errors. Include comments and/or specific questions that you have right in the document. | Provide written and/or verbal feedback on student drafts. Feedback should be critical but supportive. Try to return drafts in a timely manner (e.g., 1 week). |

**Timeline Template**

Following is a template that the student and advisor can use to develop a timeline for the thesis project. Please feel free to change the goals to correspond to the specific project (e.g., not all projects will require data collection).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| GOAL | MONTH |
| Sum | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May |
| Project conception |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Background reading |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Annotated bibliography |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Literature review |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Research methods planning |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Draft of methods |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PROPOSAL |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Submit IRB (if necessary) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Data collection |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Data analysis |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Discuss findings |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Draft of results/discussion |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Further drafts |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| FINAL MEETING |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Final draft |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |