

University of Nevada, Reno

Department of Psychology



Cognitive and Brain Sciences

Handbook

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UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO

The university is located in Reno-Sparks, a community of approximately 250,000, on the eastern edge of the Sierras. The city offers a mild climate, spectacular outdoor environments, and wide range of outdoor activities that include cycling, hiking, fishing and camping. Each year the cities of Reno and Sparks host a number of large events that attract visitors from across the county. These include ArtTown, the Nugget Rib Cookoff, the Reno Rodeo, Hot August Nights, the Reno Hot Air Balloon Races, the Reno National Championship Air Races, and Street Vibrations. Reno is the host city for a minor league baseball team, the Reno Aces, as well as a D-League NBA team, the Reno Bullhorns. The town is within an hour's drive of Lake Tahoe and several renown ski resorts, while the Bay Area and San Francisco are approximately 3.5-hours away by car. The University of Nevada, Reno is a fully accredited, doctoral degree granting institution, serving approximately 22,000 students in nearly 70 graduate and over 140 undergraduate degree programs.

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

The Department of Psychology is made up of three doctoral degree programs: the Cognitive and Brain Sciences Program, an APA accredited Clinical Program, and an ABA accredited Behavior Analysis Programs. Currently, there are 28 faculty members in the Department, and approximately 800 undergraduate majors and 120 graduate students.

MISSION STATEMENT

Cognitive and Brain Sciences is a basic component of any academic program in psychology. The Cognitive and Brain Sciences program is committed to quality training of students at the graduate and undergraduate levels and the production of high quality research. It is our goal to offer courses and training in the specific areas represented by our faculty research. We strive to train our students to become researchers and/or teachers in experimental psychology. Since our faculty members are expected to maintain active research laboratories, we provide a fertile environment for graduate and undergraduate students to participate and learn about the research process. It is our purpose to provide masters and doctoral graduate students with extensive background in several basic areas of research, to train them so that they can plan and execute original research in the field and expose them, 'in depth' to a concentrated area of research. These actions are intended to prepare masters graduates for advanced study and turn doctoral graduates into viable candidates for academic positions and successful applicants for external funding.

COGNITIVE AND BRAIN SCIENCES PROGRAM

The Graduate Program in Cognitive and Brain Sciences offers programs of study leading to the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. Students are given a strong foundation in current theory and methods and have the opportunity to specialize within a number of substantive research areas that include brain organization in developmental disabilities, comparative and developmental vision, cognitive neuroscience, memory, perception, vestibular control and movement, human factors in aviation, attention, face recognition, consciousness and neuropsychology.

The Cognitive and Brain Sciences Program has collaborative links with several other departments on campus, including Biology, Medicine, Computer Science, and Biomedical Engineering. Many of the program faculty members also maintain close working links with colleagues and research labs at other universities. Each faculty member is also a part of the Program in Neuroscience, which provides additional connections between Psychology graduate faculty and those in other departments. Neuroscience degrees are awarded through both the Departments of Psychology and Biology.

Students entering the Cognitive and Brain Sciences Program begin their research training in the lab of a primary faculty advisor who is expected to supervise the student's research throughout their time in the program. In addition to research, students complete a series of foundation courses, usually in the first two years in statistics, perception, cognition, memory, comparative psychology, and physiological psychology. These courses prepare the students for the comprehensive exam at the end of their second year. In subsequent years, a wide variety of seminars and independent study options are available for pursuing students' areas of interest.

ADMISSIONS

In order to qualify for admission, a candidate must have earned a baccalaureate degree (or equivalent) from an accredited institution along with a minimum GPA of 3.0 for the doctoral degree and 2.75 for the Master's degree. An undergraduate major in Psychology is not required for admission. The Graduate School does not have a foreign language requirement for either the Masters degree or the Doctoral degree. Please see <https://www.unr.edu/grad/admissions> for more detailed instructions on completing and submitting an application.

In order for an application to be considered complete, applicants should submit a (1) CV, (2) a statement of goals and interests including a list of desired faculty advisors, (3) official transcripts of all prior course work from all institutions that have been attended, (4) three letters of recommendation, and (5) GRE scores from an exam taken within the last five years. The Psychology Subject Area of the GRE is not required. Applications are reviewed by the program faculty and admission requires the approval of a majority of the faculty through a formal vote.

Students wishing to obtain a PhD from the Program should initially apply to the PhD program. Only those students wishing to terminate their studies in the Program after the Masters degree should apply to the master's program. Students admitted into the Masters program will be required to reapply to the PhD program if they later wish to obtain the PhD degree from the Cognitive and Brain Sciences Program.

International Student Requirements

For International Students, a test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of at least 500 is required for admission to the Graduate School. Students who have achieved a TOEFL score of 600 or higher are exempt from Intensive English Language Center evaluation. A TOEFL score of 550 or higher is the minimum necessary for a student to be approved for a teaching assistantship. TOEFL scores are not required for international students who have received a baccalaureate or advanced degree from an accredited university or college in the United States.

Students entering with a Master's Degree or previous graduate course work

Those who already hold a Masters Degree may apply up to 24 credits of course work towards the Ph.D. degree. Course work in related disciplines from other graduate programs may be used to satisfy these requirements or may be acceptable transfer credits from a prior Masters Degree program. The Program Director determines whether credits can be used to satisfy course requirements along with the approval of the Cognitive and Brain Sciences Program Faculty.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNR GRADUATE SCHOOL

Master's Degree Requirements

Minimum 30 credits total (18 @ 700+)

- 1) A minimum of 24 course credits must be taken for the master's degree
These credits can include classes, grad research, individual reading, and comp credits*
- 2) 6 Thesis credits (Psy 797) must also be taken

* Note: These are the requirements of the UNR Graduate School. As noted below, the requirements of the CBS program differ and in the case of the minimum credits required, the 24 course credits need to be satisfied by completing 15 credits of Foundation Courses and 9 Credits of Methods Courses.

Ph.D. Requirements

Minimum 72 credits total (30 @ 700+)

- 1) 24 (18 @ 700+) course credits from your UNR master's degree can be transferred toward your Ph.D.
Students entering with a master's degree will have to determine how many credits will be allowed to transfer from their previous university. This is usually left to the discretion of the Program Director and the student's primary advisor.
- 2) 24 additional course credits must also be taken (possibly more if you are entering with a masters from another institution, see item 1). These credits can include any class credits, grad research credits, individual reading credits, and comp credits.
- 3) 24 Dissertation (Psy 799) credits must also be taken.

Additional Important tips from previous graduate students:

- 1) File your 'Program of Study' (POS) no later than one and half semester prior to your planned graduation date. For example, the POS deadline for May 2011 graduation was November 24th 2010. All of the other necessary forms can be completed prior to your defense. (see <http://www.unr.edu/grad/forms> for additional information)
- 2) Follow the degree requirement above when completing your Master's Degree POS form. *Why?* The Master's Degree POS form asks you to fill in the courses you have completed. If you list all of the courses you have taken so far, including those that you plan to apply to your Ph.D. only 24 credits will transfer. For example, if you listed 42 (including 6 thesis credits) credits on your Master's POS, you will lose 12 credits that you could have used toward your Ph.D. requirements.
- 3) Certain course numbers have maximum credit allotments. Once you reach the maximum for that course number you will not be able to count additional credits taken under the same number toward your degree. These maximums include:
 - Psy 761 = 6 credits
 - Psy 762 = 6 credits
 - Psy 763 = 9 credits
 - Psy 755 (Individual Reading) = 9 credits
 - Psy 752/753 (Grad Research) = 6 credits

GENERAL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Overview:

The M.A. and Ph.D. programs in Cognitive and Brain Sciences follow the general graduate school requirements as detailed in the University catalog and online (<https://www.unr.edu/grad>). Students should obtain a program of study form from the graduate school website (<https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/program-of-study.pdf>) to review the prescribed steps and times in progressing toward an advanced degree. Students entering the Masters Degree program are expected to complete the degree within 2-4 years of the date of matriculation, and no later than 6 years from this date. Students entering the Ph.D. program are expected to complete the Ph.D. Degree within 4-6 years after matriculation (3-5 years for those students entering the program with a Masters Degree in Psychology), and no later than 8 years from this date. These deadlines are set by the Graduate School. Note, the deadlines for maintaining satisfactory progress in the Program may be less lenient (Please see "Timeline for Completion" below).

Students who register for 9 credits or more are considered as full-time students. Students receiving funding either through Research or Teaching Assistantships are considered full-time students if they register for 6 or more credits. To remain in "good standing" all graduate students must register for at least 3 graduate-level credits during each fall and spring semester until graduation. There are no minimum registration requirements during the summer. However, graduate assistants with summer assignments must register for at least one graduate-level credit during each regular summer session to be exempt from FICA.

Students are expected to earn A's and B's in all graduate courses. A student whose overall graduate GPA falls below 3.0 is placed on probation, and if the overall GPA remains below 3.0 for two consecutive semesters, the student is dropped from graduate standing. A student may reapply for graduate standing by achieving an overall graduate GPA of at least 3.0. In the Cognitive and Brain Sciences Program, a grade of C or worse in any course is sufficient cause for review of the student's continuation in the program

Lab Participation and Research

Research experience is accomplished through participation in the student's advisor's research lab. All faculty members have active, ongoing research programs and students are expected to participate in laboratory experiences in connection with these labs throughout their entire training. Regular attendance at primary (and secondary, if applicable) lab meetings is mandatory.

Students participate in an individual faculty member's lab as their primary lab placement. Students are expected to join a laboratory as a first course of action once they arrive at UNR. Students who enter the program without an advisor will be assigned one to facilitate the initiation of a research project. Participation in a lab occurs by mutual agreement between the student and faculty member. Shortly after starting in the program, students will begin their 1st year research project, the progress and results of which are to be presented at the end of the 1st year as part of the Cognitive and Brain Sciences Spring research symposium. Presentations are in the form of the 10-15minute conference-style research talk. In subsequent years, more senior graduate students are expected to present the progress and results of their research at the Cognitive and Brain Sciences Winter research Colloquia.

Students may also request to participate in research in other labs if they should desire.

MASTERS DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

In order to earn a Masters Degree through the Cognitive and Brain Sciences Program, students must complete:

- 1) Required coursework
- 2) The Master's Comprehensive Exam
- 3) A research project that is written in the form of a Master's Thesis
- 4) A defense of the Master's Thesis in a public talk and private oral exam.

Upon completion of these requirements the students must submit the necessary paperwork with the UNR graduate school.

These four requirements are described in detail as follows:

1) Course Requirements:

Students earning a Masters Degree must complete a minimum of 30 credits of acceptable graduate course work (courses with grades of "C" or lower will not be counted) as approved by the student's advisory-examining committee and the Cognitive and Brain Sciences Program Director. These 30 credits must include a set of 5 Foundation courses (15 credits) in appropriate subject areas, a set of 3 Methods courses (9 credits) and Masters Thesis Research: Psy 797 (6 Credits). Two of the Methods courses must be Psy706: Intermediate Statistics and Psy 627: Applications of Computer Programming. At least 21 of these 30 credits must be earned in on-campus courses at UNR and a minimum of 18 total credits of course work must be taken at the 700-level.

In addition to the required 30 Credits described above, students are also required to enroll in at least 1 but not more than 3 credits of Psy 795 to prepare for the Master's Comprehensive Exam. In order for students to qualify for a Teaching Assistant position, they must enroll in GRAD 701S. This short course should be taken prior to performing any teaching or Teaching Assistant duties and is usually offered during the student orientation period prior to the start of the Fall Semester. No credit is offered for the completing this short course. In addition, students receiving funding as a Teaching Assistant may also be required to complete a 3 credit course in teaching skills offered through the Excellence in Teaching Program. Students can also enroll in up to 6 credits of PSY 752 (Graduate Research) and up to 9 Credits of PSY 755 (Individual Reading). These credits cannot be used toward the 30 credit requirement for the M.A. degree.

Students entering with an M.A. in another field may substitute equivalent graduate courses from another institution to satisfy parts of this requirement. The applicability of transfer credits is determined by the program faculty and requires approval by the program director.

Examples of Foundation Courses Include:

Psy 709: Comparative Sensory Neuroscience

Psy 720: Sensation and Perception

Psy 721: Advanced Psychophysiology

Psy 729: Human Memory

Topical seminars are also offered through the following course numbers, which upon approval of the Cognitive and Brain Sciences Director, can also be taken to satisfy the 5-course foundation requirement:

Psy 761 or 762: Contemporary Issues in Psychology (maximum of 6 credits each)

Psy 763: Special Topics in Cognitive and Brain Sciences (maximum of 9 credits)

In addition to the two required Methods courses, students must also complete at least one further lab-oriented methods or statistics course. Current examples of these courses include:

Psy 707: Intermediate Statistics II (or Math 757)

Psy 710: Experimental Design

Psy 780: Advanced Human Psychophysiology Lab

Psy 761-763 (special topics) courses may also be used, upon approval of the Cognitive and Brain Sciences Director, to satisfy the requirement for the 3rd Methods course if they are taught as a lab-based methods course.

2) The Master's Comprehensive Exam:

The M.A. Comprehensive Examination shall be taken at the end of the Spring semester during the second year of study. Students failing to complete this requirement will undergo a review by the CBS faculty and will remain ineligible to teach summer classes.

This examination is designed to assess the student's familiarity with basic areas in Cognitive and Brain Sciences. The exam is given on two successive days during the Spring Semester, with each session lasting around 6 hours. The exam will include 5 topical areas administered by the program faculty and would normally correspond to the areas represented by the 5 Foundation courses the student has elected to take.

Areas covered on the exam may include but are not limited to:

- Perception
- Memory
- Cognition
- Psychophysiology
- Cognition
- Cognitive Neuroscience
- Neuropsychology
- Evolutionary Psychology

Students should consult the Director of the Cognitive and Brain Sciences Program for more details concerning the examination for any given year. Each question on the exam is scored on a 5-point scale. The student must average a minimum of 2.75 to pass and satisfy the requirement for earning a Master's Degree. A student who does not pass on the first try may, on approval of the program faculty, be given one opportunity to retake the entire exam on the next occasion it is administered. The following interpretations of the grading scale are used (although a 5-point scale is normally used, a reader may assign a score of "0" for "no response" or a totally irrelevant answer):

- 5 – Excellent: best or nearly best possible answer
- 4 – Very Good: more than sufficient quality to pass
- 3 – Acceptable: Minimum level for passing at the Ph.D. qualifying level
- 2 – Unsatisfactory: quality of answer falls short of the minimum passing standard
- 1 - Failure – answer below expectations for graduate students

Note 1: Students may substitute one seminar course from outside the program as part of their 5-course foundation requirement. The substituted course must be approved by both the student's advisor and program director. Thus if a foundation course is substituted then the outside instructor must be willing to contribute and grade one section of the MA comprehensive exam based on their subject area.

Note 2: An individual faculty member can provide only one section of the MA comprehensive exam

3) Master's Thesis:

The Master's Thesis is overseen by an advisory-examining committee made up of at least three members of the UNR graduate faculty. Two faculty members who represent the student's area of specialization and one faculty member is selected from the university "at-large." The research underlying the Masters Thesis is to be supervised by a faculty member in the Cognitive and Brain Sciences and is to be evaluated by a second faculty reader in the CBS Program. These two faculty members serve as the two members of the committee who represent the student's area of specialization. In addition the committee must include one faculty outside of the Department of Psychology to represent the university 'at large'. Additional members of the committee can be added. Thesis research involving human subjects or animals must be approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Nevada, Reno, prior to data collection.

Upon completion of the Thesis Research, the background and significance, methods and analyses, results and discussion of the project shall be written in the form of a Master's Thesis. Alternatively, a 1st-authored manuscript describing the Thesis Research that has been submitted or accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal may substituted for the Thesis document and satisfy the Thesis requirement for earning the Master's Degree.

4) Master's Thesis Defense and Examination:

The Master's defense starts with a public one-hour talk on the applicant's research given to faculty and graduate students in the program and the committee. This talk should be treated as a "job talk" in which the student highlights the importance and significance of the work for an informed but general audience. Following this presentation, the committee meets with the student for the oral exam during which the student is questioned

about the theoretical and empirical approaches and implications of their thesis research. The satisfaction of this requirement to earn the Master’s degree depends on the unanimous approval of the advisory-examining committee.

Upon completion of the above requirements, students must apply for graduation and submit the necessary documents to the Graduate School in order to receive the degree,.

Recommended Timeline for Satisfying the Master’s Degree in 2-Years

The table below provides an example of a typical two-year curriculum that would satisfy the requirements of the Master’s Degree within a 2-year timeframe.

	Year 1	Year 2
Fall	Choose Primary Advisor & Begin 1st Year Project TA-GRAD 701S Foundation 1 (3credit) Foundation 2 (3credit) Graduate Research (3credit)	Form Thesis Committee Begin/Continue Thesis Research Foundation 4 (3credit) Methods 2(3credit) Thesis Research(3credit)
Spring	Foundation 3 (3credit) Methods 1 (3credit) Thesis Research(3credit) Give 1st Year Research Talk	Foundation 5(3credit) Methods 3(3credit) Masters Comp (3credit) Comp Exam and Thesis Defense towards end of Semester

DOCTORAL DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

In order to earn a Ph.D. through the Cognitive and Brain Sciences Program, students must complete

- 1) Satisfy all the requirements of the Master's Degree
- 2) Required Coursework
- 3) The Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam
- 4) A research project that is written in the form of a Dissertation
- 5) A defense of the Dissertation Research in a public talk and private oral exam.

Upon completion of these requirements the students must submit the necessary paperwork with the UNR graduate school.

1) Satisfying all the requirements of the Master's Degree:

For the Ph.D. Degree, students are required to have obtained a Masters Degree either from the University of Nevada, or upon approval of the Cognitive and Brain Sciences Director, another accredited institution. Prospective and current Ph.D. students should carefully review the Master's requirements detailed above.

2) Required Coursework:

A minimum of 72 credits is required for the Ph.D. Degree (courses with grades of "C" or lower will not be counted). At least 48 of these credits must be in course work as approved by the student's advisory-examining committee and the Cognitive and Brain Sciences Program Director. Students are required to take 24 credits for dissertation research (Psy 799). A student may apply up to 24 credits with grades of B or better from post-baccalaureate graduate studies in Psychology toward the doctoral degree. A minimum of 30 of the 48 credits of course work must be at the 700 level. Since not all 600-level psychology graduate courses will be accepted for the M.A. or Ph.D. degrees, students need advance approval for any 600-level courses taken in psychology, and for any graduate courses taken in related disciplines outside of psychology. The advance approval must come from the Cognitive and Brain Sciences Program faculty. As noted above, students may also be required to complete a 3 credit course in teaching skills offered through the Excellence in Teaching Program. These credits cannot be used toward the 72 credit requirement for the Ph.D. degree in the program. However, students may register for Graduate Research (Psy 752) with a maximum of 6 credits and Individual Reading (755), with a maximum of 9 credits. These credits can be used to fulfill degree requirements.

3) The Ph.D. qualifying exam

There is no separate exam to qualify for candidacy to the doctoral degree. In order to satisfy this requirement, students must pass the Master's Comprehensive Exam with a minimum average score of 3.0. Thus, for a student entering the program with a Master's degree, passing the Master's Comprehensive Exam with a minimum average score of 3.0 qualifies them for candidacy to the doctoral degree. For a student entering the program without a Master's degree, passing the Master's Comprehensive Exam with a minimum average score of 3.0, both satisfies the requirement to earn the Master's degree and qualifies them for candidacy to the doctoral degree.

4) The Dissertation

Dissertation Research is overseen by an advisory-examining committee made up of at least five members of the UNR graduate faculty: the committee Chair (advisor), at least two graduate faculty members from Psychology, at least one graduate faculty member in a field related to the student's major area of concentration, and at least one graduate faculty member representing the University "at large." This committee must approve the student's program of studies, accept the proposal for the dissertation, and conduct the final oral examination. Doctoral dissertations involving either human subjects or animals must be approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Nevada, Reno prior to the collection of data of any kind. This approval is contingent upon the approval of the student's dissertation proposal.

Dissertation proposals will be in the form of the research proposal portion of an NIH grant application (e.g. NRSA) and should include a literature review and discussion of the proposed research questions and the methods and design that will be used to address them. There are no page limitations to the proposal. Proposals must be defended in a one-hour public talk and private oral examination and approved by the student's PhD committee prior to the start of data collection and at least one semester prior to the date of the final defense of the dissertation.

The completed dissertation consists of a written document describing the background and significance, methods and analyses, results and discussion of the dissertation project and must be formatted as required by the Graduate School. The dissertation can include published or submitted papers in peer-reviewed journal articles as chapters, and at least one section of the dissertation must include material submitted or accepted for publication in the stand-alone format of a publication. The contents of the written dissertation must be drawn from the dissertation proposal. Satisfaction of this requirement requires the unanimous approval of the dissertation advisory committee, which is typically granted following the Dissertation Defense and Oral Examination.

5) The Dissertation Defense and oral examination

The dissertation defense shall be in the form of a one-hour talk that is open to the public. The student must submit a draft of the written dissertation to their advisory-committee at least two weeks prior to the defense. It is the student's obligation to post a department-wide notice of the defense two weeks prior to its occurrence. After the public presentation, the student and the committee will convene for the oral examination, which will consist of a question period and evaluation. Satisfaction of this requirement requires the unanimous approval of the dissertation advisory committee and typically requires revision to the Dissertation.

Dissertation proposal meetings and defenses may not be conducted in the absence of a member of the dissertation committee without prior approval of the committee members.

Upon completion of the above requirements, students must apply for graduation and submit the necessary documents to the Graduate School in order to receive the degree,.

General Timeline for Completion of Master's and Ph.D. Degrees

Students will be expected to progress through the program by the following deadlines; failure to meet any deadline requires a program review and director approval and may result in probationary status and loss of funding

Overview per year:

Expected Timeline	Deadline
Year 1: 1. Select advisor, register name with the CBS grad chair 2. 1 st year presentation at the end of the year.	1. 1 st semester 2. End of second semester
Year 2: 1. Comprehensive Masters exam in the spring 2. Submit Masters thesis 3. 2 nd year/Masters presentations	End of 4th semester *No summer teaching without Masters degree
Year 3: 1. PhD proposal defense & presentations – Spring	End of 8 th semester
Year 4: 1. Conduct dissertation research 2. PhD talk & private defense – Spring	End of 12 th semester (6-year plan)

EVALUATION OF PROGRESS

Yearly Reports/Evaluation-

1. Student Report- At the end of each year students will submit a report form describing what has been accomplished that year.
2. Advisor Review – Each advisor will write a letter indicating whether the person is making: Excellent, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory progress in coursework and research.
 - a. Two years of Unsatisfactory progress could be grounds for dismissal.
 - b. Students will not be allowed to proceed to PhD candidacy unless satisfactory progress is made.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION/ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

One of the outstanding characteristics of the program is its collegial atmosphere. A conscious effort is made to maintain this valuable quality. It is expected that conflicts between students and faculty will invariably occur involving issues of education, task expectations, and interpersonal differences. One of the difficulties in resolving conflicts is the power differential between faculty and students. Every effort is made to treat students as junior colleagues, thus reducing the power differential and leading to more openness and candor. The development of holistic relationships, i.e., going beyond narrow academic roles - between faculty and students - increases the amount of interpersonal interaction and reduces the distance between students and faculty. Students are encouraged to work out conflicts among themselves and with faculty in order to enhance the overall learning atmosphere. Within the structure of the program, a process has been developed to deal with conflicts, particularly between faculty and students.

The steps are as follows:

- Conflict is recognized by either party involved.
- Attempts are made by the two parties involved to resolve the conflict with as much direct communication as possible, or at least to mutually recognize that a conflict exists.
- If the conflict cannot be resolved, the two parties involved will select one student and one faculty member (who are not involved) to serve as negotiators in the conflict.
- A meeting is held with the two parties, the two negotiators, and the Program Director. Meetings will continue until the conflict is resolved.

The Office of Equal Opportunity & Title IX is also available on campus to ensure that you have the right to an education and to work and advance in employment on the basis of merit, ability, and potential without fear of discrimination. For more information about the Office of Equal Opportunity & Title IX you can call 784 1547.