



PROGRAM HANDBOOK

Adult Development and Aging

Departments of Psychology

Cleveland State University & The University of Akron

August 2015

For students who enter the program on or after Fall 2015

Foreword

Welcome to the Adult Development & Aging program in the Psychology Department at The University of Akron! We are so glad you selected our program for your graduate training and delighted to be working with you.

This handbook was designed to provide you with important information regarding the structure, expectations, requirements, and policies of the program. In short, this handbook should be the “go to” for guidelines on the who, what, when, how, and why of your graduate training.

The Adult Development and Aging faculty are dedicated to excellent scholarship and high standards of achievement in graduate training. The program is designed to provide students with opportunities to develop into aging scholars of the highest caliber.

All information in this handbook is in accordance with the graduate schools at both universities unless otherwise noted.

We wish you the very best as you pursue success in your graduate training in our program.

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Program Philosophy

In 2012, 13% of the U.S. population was 65 years or older and this number is expected to more than double by the year 2060 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2013). Aging is emerging as an important research, teaching, and service area because this segment of the population is growing so rapidly. The Psychology departments at The University of Akron and Cleveland State University offer a joint doctoral program in the Psychology of Adult Development and Aging. We define *Adult Development and Aging* as the study of psychological development and change throughout the adult years. Our unique program is one of only a handful of Adult Development and Aging doctoral programs in the country, and the **only one** in the state of Ohio. Our faculty's core research areas cover a wide variety of interests including memory, attention, and aging; cognition and emotion; dementia and psychosocial interventions; resiliency in older adulthood; and the aging worker.

By the end of doctoral training, our students are well-prepared to work in a number of roles including academia, medical centers, government agencies, and research institutes.

Students are trained as researchers with expertise in social, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of adulthood and aging, who convey existing knowledge through teaching; students also generate new knowledge through basic and applied research, and become involved with communities in addressing social issues related to aging. The program gives students the opportunity to work with multiple faculty members across two different universities, offering broad exposure to the growing areas of basic and applied aging research.

Graduate School Expectations for Coursework

Students admitted to the program are required to take approximately equal amounts of coursework at each institution. The doctoral program in Adult Development and Aging requires a minimum of 96 semester credit hours of study at Cleveland State University

and 90 credit hours at University of Akron.¹ Required coursework covers the areas of 1) research methods/design, 2) statistics, 3) foundation coursework in adult development and aging, and, 4) advanced research seminars, including *Mental Health and Aging*, *Neuropsychology of Aging*, *Social and Emotional Development in Later Life*, and *Cognitive Aging*. Students must complete a total of 16 credits of research methods/design and statistics coursework. Students also will take coursework that may consist of *Independent Reading and Research*, *Special Topics in Psychology*, *Special Problems in Psychology*, *Thesis*, and *Dissertation* credits. In consultation with their advisor, students may take elective coursework as well.²

Graduate School Expectations for GA/TA Assignments

Graduate students receive a tuition waiver and stipend in exchange for a Graduate Assistantship (GA) or Teaching Assistantship (TA). Graduate students in good standing (i.e., meeting program requirements on time) are eligible for renewal of their assistantship each year for GA or TA funding through their fourth year of study. Funding beyond the fourth year is contingent upon available departmental resources. Both GA and TA assignments require 20 hours of work per week. Graduate students are expected to meet with their assistantship supervisor regularly and fulfill the obligations outlined by the supervisor. Because assistantship assignments at each university are tied to the annual budgeting cycle, assistantship contracts are renewed on a yearly basis. However, our philosophy is to provide doctoral students with at least four years of on-going support if possible. This support is typically in the form of a nine-month stipend and tuition waiver.³

Graduate School Expectations for Research

Graduate students are expected to conduct ethical research studies on aging and adult development. Both the master's thesis project and dissertation must be comprised of empirical research within the domain of adult development and aging. Studies will not be approved by the committee as appropriate for a MA or PhD from this program if they do not meet these requirements.

Graduate students must follow all ethical standards of conducting psychological research including standards described by the Institutional Review Board and standards of professional conduct with research participants, faculty, peers, and collaborators. Ethical standards of data reporting must also be followed (see APA guidelines).

¹ This difference between the two universities is being considered for change so that both universities require a minimum of 90 credit hours. The handbook will be updated when and if the proposed changes are accepted.

² The program is moving toward an elective option so that students will be required to take the 5 Core Courses (Adult Development & Aging; Neuropsychology of Aging; Social & Emotional Development in Adulthood; Mental Health & Aging; Cognitive Aging), 4 Methodology Courses (Quantitative I; Quantitative II; Research Methods; Multivariate), and 2 electives from the following (Sensory Motor Processes; Health Psychology; Diversity in Aging; Pharmacology; Sexuality; Industrial Gerontology). The handbook will be updated when and if the proposed changes are accepted.

³ There may be opportunities for summer support and/or tuition waivers on an individual basis. For example, students at The University of Akron are eligible to apply for work-study during the summer which provides a stipend and tuition waiver.

Program Faculty

Designation as Core Faculty or Affiliated Faculty is based on the original designation in the Ohio Board of Regents proposal for the Adult Development and Aging (ADA) program.

Core Faculty

Roles: interest in and availability to serve as primary advisor to graduate students in the program; conduct adult development and aging research; provide leadership to steer and grow the program; active involvement in ADA curriculum.

Responsibilities: Attend all program faculty meetings and brown bag meetings; serve on at least one ADA faculty committee; chair own students' thesis and dissertation committees; interest in and availability to serve on other students' thesis and dissertation committees; teach ADA courses when available and appropriate; active involvement in comprehensive exams including developing/updating reading lists and questions, grading written responses, presence and participation at oral comprehensives, and serving as a primary or secondary reader on the specialty exam.

Name, Title, and Email	Institution	Research Focus
Allard, Eric Assistant Professor e.s.allard@csuohio.edu	CSU	Aging and emotion regulation, motivation, well-being, eye tracking, psychophysiology
Allen, Philip Professor paallen@uakron.edu	UA	Perception, attention, memory, word recognition, event-related potentials, quantitative models, and aging
Bisconti, Toni Associate Professor tb33@uakron.edu	UA	Social aging, social support, resilience, bereavement, daily diary emotion regulation, ageism, sexuality across the lifespan

Name, Title, and Email	Institution	Research Focus
Judge, Katherine Associate Professor Senior Research Scientist, MBRI k.judge46@csuohio.edu	CSU	Dementia, memory loss, Alzheimer's disease, traumatic brain injury, stroke, family caregiving, stress process, cognitive rehabilitation, psychosocial interventions
Kahana, Boaz Professor b.kahana@csuohio.edu	CSU	Clinical psychology and mental health and aging; Coping with stress in later life, negative life events and war trauma, disablement and aging, LGBT and aging
McLennan, Conor Associate Professor c.mclennan@csuohio.edu	CSU	Word recognition, speech, language, perception, cognitive psychology, aging
Poreh, Amir Professor a.poreh@csuohio.edu	CSU	Neuropsychological assessment, memory, executive functioning, dementia, volumetric MRI, hippocampal atrophy
Slifkin, Andrew Associate Professor a.slifkin@csuohio.edu	CSU	Motor control, motor imagery, movement disorders, action, perception
Stanley, Jennifer Tehan Assistant Professor jstanley@uakron.edu	UA	Emotion regulation and emotion perception and aging; social cognition and aging
Sterns, Harvey Professor hsterns@uakron.edu	UA	Industrial gerontology, spatial maps, human factors, housing, and aging

Affiliated Faculty

Roles: Consult with students and faculty members on research projects of overlapping interest; contribute feedback to research within the program; contribute feedback to program development

Responsibilities: Serve on student thesis and dissertation committees; attend ADA faculty meetings and brown bags; teach ADA courses; serve as additional readers for comprehensive exams as needed

Name and Email	Institution	Research Focus
Kaut, Kevin Professor kpk@uakron.edu	UA	Neurobiology of learning and memory in animal models, age effects on cognitive/behavioral responses to injury

Name and Email	Institution	Research Focus
Levant, Ronald Professor levant@uakron.edu	UA	Men's gender role strain, emotional expression, mental and physical health, fathering, and masculinity ideology in a multicultural perspective
Rakos, Richard Associate Dean and Professor r.rakos@csuohio.edu	CSU	Clinical training, psychology and the law
Smith, Albert F. Associate Professor a.f.smith@csuohio.edu	CSU	Memory and health behavior, statistics
Yoder, Janice Professor jyoder@uakron.edu	UA	Psychology of gender, feminist psychology

Program Structure

- The student is required to maintain at least a 3.0 GPA⁴;
- a minimum of 90 graduate credits at UA and 96⁵ at CSU including a 30-credit master's program. A student may be required to complete additional credits beyond the 90 minimum credit requirement;
- Completion of Ph.D. core courses in the student's specialty area: adult development and aging.
- Completion of additional required and elective courses to be planned in conjunction with the student's faculty advisor and subject to approval by the adult development and aging committees.
- Completion of Program Milestones for progress toward degree (e.g., master's thesis, comprehensive exams, and dissertation).

⁴ The Graduate School minimum GPA requirement for a student to be in good standing is 3.0. We are currently proposing to increase this requirement to 3.25 for the ADA program. If and when this is approved, we will update the GPA requirement throughout the handbook.

⁵ We are currently working on a curriculum change to reduce the credit hour requirements at CSU to 90 credit hours. If and when this is approved, we will change it in the handbook.

Coursework ⁶

Required Coursework⁷: Also refer to **APPENDIX A: COURSEWORK CHECKLIST**

Title	Credits
<i>The following courses must be completed before your Master's Degree.</i>	
Quantitative Methods I	4
Quantitative Methods II	4
Master's Thesis	1
Adult Development & Aging	4
<i>At least 17 credits must be completed from the following list PRIOR to your Master's Degree.</i>	
Research Methods	4
Multivariate & Computer Methods in Psychology	4
Teaching of Psychology ⁸	3
Social and Emotional Development Across the Lifespan	4
Health Psychology in Later Life	4
Cognitive Aging	4
Mental Health & Aging	4
Neuropsychology of Aging	4
Sensory & Motor Processes in Aging / Diversity in Aging	4
Independent Readings and Research (up to 13 hours; Thesis)	4
<i>To be completed prior to graduation with PhD</i>	
Dissertation (minimum of 12 hours)	variable

⁶ Course descriptions will be added after the curriculum change proposals are accepted (being submitted summer 2015).

⁷ The program is moving toward an elective option so that students will be required to take the 5 Core Courses (Adult Development & Aging; Neuropsychology of Aging; Social & Emotional Development in Adulthood; Mental Health & Aging; Cognitive Aging), 4 Methodology Courses (Quantitative I; Quantitative II; Research Methods; Multivariate), and 2 electives from the following (Sensory Motor Processes; Health Psychology; Diversity in Aging; Pharmacology; Sexuality; Industrial Gerontology). The handbook will be updated when and if the proposed changes are accepted.

⁸ This course is only required of the University of Akron students.

Program Sequence

Adult Development & Aging Generic Course Progression⁹

Year 1

Summer II

Teaching of Psychology (UA only)
PSY 699 Master's Thesis (UA only)

Fall Semester

Quantitative Methods I
Adult Development & Aging
PSY 780 - core course or elective
PSY 780 – Psychology Training

Spring Semester

Quantitative Methods II
up to two – core course
Supplement w PSY 797 – Ind Rdg & Research
PSY 780 – Psychology Training

Year 2

Fall Semester

PSY 780 – core course
PSY 754 – Research Methods

Spring Semester

PSY 780 – Multivariate & Computer Methods in Psych
PSY 780 – core course

Year 3

Fall Semester

up to two PSY 780 – core course
Supplement w PSY 797 – Ind Rdg & Research

Spring Semester

PSY 780 – core course
PSY 797 – Independent Reading & Research

Year 4

Fall Semester

PSY 797 – Independent Reading & Research
PSY 899 – Dissertation

Spring Semester

PSY 797 – Independent Reading & Research
PSY 899 – Dissertation

Year 5

Fall Semester

PSY 797 – Independent Reading & Research
PSY 899 – Dissertation

Spring Semester

PSY 797 – Independent Reading & Research
PSY 899 – Dissertation

⁹ The course progression changes every year because courses are generally offered on a 3 year rotation (with the exception of all quantitative courses and *Adult Development and Aging*). Also, some courses can be taken in a student's second or third year (e.g., Research Methods), depending on which other courses are being offered in that particular year.

Adult Development & Aging Example Course Progression¹⁰

Year 1

Summer II

PSY 780 – Teaching of Psychology¹¹

Fall Semester

PSY 601 – Quantitative Methods I

PSY 727 – Adult Development & Aging

PSY 780 – Cognitive Psychology of Aging

Spring Semester

PSY 602 – Quantitative Methods II

PSY 780 – Health Psychology in Later Life

PSY 797 – Independent Reading & Research

Year 2

Fall Semester

PSY 699 – Master's Thesis

PSY 780 – Mental Health & Aging

PSY 780 – Neuropsychology of Aging

PSY 797 – Independent Reading & Research

Spring Semester

PSY 699 – Master's Thesis

PSY 780 – Multivariate & Computer Methods in Psych

PSY 780 – Social & Emotional Develop in Adulthood

PSY 797 – Independent Reading & Research

Year 3

Fall Semester

PSY 754 – Research Methods

PSY 797 – Independent Reading & Research

PSY 797 – Independent Reading & Research

Spring Semester

PSY 780 – Sensory & Motor Processes in Aging

PSY 797 – Independent Reading & Research

PSY 797 – Independent Reading & Research

Year 4

Fall Semester

PSY 797 – Independent Reading & Research

PSY 899 – Dissertation

Spring Semester

PSY 797 – Independent Reading & Research

PSY 899 – Dissertation

Year 5

Fall Semester

PSY 797 – Independent Reading & Research

PSY 899 – Dissertation

Spring Semester

PSY 797 – Independent Reading & Research

PSY 899 – Dissertation

¹⁰ Please note that this is **one** potential sequence of the ADA curriculum.

¹¹ For UA students only

Thesis Requirements and Procedures

All students in the ADA program must complete a thesis¹². A thesis is an empirical study of publishable quality within the domain of adult development and aging. Thesis committees are comprised of 3 members: the major advisor and at least one additional ADA faculty member at UA and one additional ADA faculty member at CSU. The student must obtain approval to conduct the study from his or her master's thesis committee prior to data collection. For the proposal, the student distributes a proposal document to their committee before a proposal defense meeting. Once the study is complete, and to fulfill the requirements for a master's degree, students must defend the thesis. For the thesis defense, students distribute a complete manuscript of the empirical study to his or her thesis committee prior to the defense meeting. Committee members decide whether the student has passed the thesis requirements based on the document and defense meeting and the degree to which the product meets the approved proposal.

A student may begin work on his or her thesis research project at any time after admission to the graduate program realizing that he/she must meet all M.A. degree requirements as specified by the Graduate School/Graduate College and the Department of Psychology for successful completion of the program. Students must be continuously enrolled until completion of their M.A. degree. Failure to maintain continuous enrollment without receiving prior program approval for a leave of absence will result in a student being dropped from his or her degree program.

The University of Akron

Students at The University of Akron have the option to complete a *Thesis Waiver* rather than a Thesis. All of the requirements described above apply to both the Thesis Waiver and Thesis options. The only difference between the two is that the Thesis Waiver does not need to go through the Graduate School (which requires more lead time to be eligible for graduation and specific formatting requirements so the document can be bound).

Students who have chosen the Thesis Waiver option must register for at least one credit hour of Master's Thesis. Students who complete a thesis will receive a grade of "CR." Students who waive the thesis will receive a "PI" for Master's Thesis credits. Students completing a Master's Thesis will need to register for a total of 8 credits.

The Thesis option *does* need to go through the Graduate School. See [Graduate School](#) webpage for guidelines and deadlines.

Cleveland State University

More information about the thesis requirements and format for Cleveland State University students can be found on The College of Graduate Studies [Thesis & Dissertation](#) page.

¹² The only exception is if a previous master's thesis has been approved for transfer by the ADA faculty. See section on Transfer of Credits.

Deadlines for Master of Arts (MA)

Program deadlines, requirements, and forms are identical for the master's thesis and the master's thesis waiver options. (There are additional graduate school requirements for the master's thesis and thesis waiver options beyond those described below). Students can keep track of their progress using APPENDIX B: PROGRAM MILESTONES CHECKLIST.

Master's Proposal Defense

The deadline for completing the master's proposal defense is **April 1** of the first year. Students must schedule the committee meeting and distribute the proposal document to the members of their committee at least two weeks in advance of the committee meeting. At this time, the *Master's Thesis Proposal Defense Timeline Form* is due to the Program Chair. Students must obtain the signatures of their advisor, committee members, and the Program Chair at their university. This completed form is due to the Program Chair at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense meeting, but no later than **March 15** (see APPENDIX C: MASTER'S THESIS FORMS).

Upon approval of the master's proposal defense, the *Master's Thesis Proposal Approval Form* is due to the Program Chair (deadline is **April 1** of the first year; see APPENDIX C: MASTER'S THESIS FORMS).

If there are extenuating circumstances that preclude the student defending their thesis proposal by April 1 of the first year, the student must request permission to defer the proposal defense from the Program Chair by completing the *Petition to Defer Master's Proposal Defense Form* by **March 1** of the first year (APPENDIX C: MASTER'S THESIS FORMS).

Master's Thesis Defense

The deadline for completing the master's thesis defense is **April 1** of the second year. Students must schedule the committee meeting and distribute the thesis document to the members of their committee at least two weeks in advance of the committee meeting. At this time, the *Master's Thesis Defense Timeline Form* is due to the Program Chair. Students must obtain the signatures of their advisor, committee members, and the Program Chair at their university. This completed form is due to the Program Chair at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense meeting, and no later than **March 15** (see APPENDIX C: MASTER'S THESIS FORMS).

Upon committee approval of the master's thesis defense, the *Master's Thesis Defense Approval Form* is due to the Program Chair (deadline is **April 1** of second year; see APPENDIX C: MASTER'S THESIS FORMS).

Any deviation from the above deadlines must be petitioned in writing (APPENDIX C: MASTER'S THESIS FORMS for petition form) no later than **March 1** of a student's second year.

Comprehensive Exams

Students complete comprehensive exams following their third year in the program and after they have completed the required coursework. There are three sections to the ADA Comprehensive Examination:

- (1) The written comprehensive examination will be held on the **Monday and Tuesday of the third week in June**;
 - (2) The oral examination will be held **the first Monday after the 4th of July**; and
 - (3) the student's specialty exam, which is a literature review in the student's area of interest or a dissertation prospectus, is due to his/her committee by **October 1**.
1. The written examination consists of eight questions covering topics relevant to all students pursuing a doctoral degree in ADA psychology (including methodology and statistics). The written comprehensive examination will be administered over the course of two eight-hour days (four questions per day). It will consist of essay questions covering all areas in which the students take courses in the ADA field. The questions will be written and reviewed (graded) by the ADA faculty. The goal of the examination is to assess students' breadth of knowledge – including their ability to integrate and apply this knowledge in the ADA field.
 2. The oral examination is conducted by the full ADA faculty from both UA and CSU and will be an oral defense of the written portion of the exam, in addition to any general-knowledge information the faculty would like to include from the reading list or ADA courses. The goal of the oral examination is to give students an opportunity to defend their written responses and further discuss their knowledge base in adult development and aging at a scholarly level.
 3. The take-home specialty exam requires the student to write a literature review or dissertation prospectus. This paper should include theoretical background for the student's area of interest. It should be a 25-page paper or prospectus and should be submitted to his/her Dissertation advisor, the Program Chair, and one more committee member as a second reader (to be determined by the student in conjunction with his/her Advisor).

Grading

For the written general comprehensive exam, two readers will be assigned to each question and will assess answers on a scale of 1-5. An average score (over readers) of at least 3 is needed to "pass" that question. A "pass" is necessary on at least 6 questions in order for a student to successfully complete comps. If a student does not pass the written portion of the comprehensive exams, then he/she may not take the oral portion. Additionally, he or she will be required to retake the sections that were missed before the end of the fall semester. If passed, orals will be given in the first week of the spring semester.

The oral examination is conducted by the full program faculty: Each question from the written examination will be covered; in addition, faculty may ask questions about readings on the reading list. Students are again required to pass 6/8 of the questions. If a student passes the written exam, but not the oral exam, the student will be permitted to retake the oral examination once (within 1 month) over the questions that he/she did not pass.

The specialty exam is evaluated by the advisor and the second reader. Each reader will give a pass/fail assessment, in addition to giving the student specific feedback on the document. The student must turn in the completed Comprehensive Exams Form found in [APPENDIX D: COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS FORM](#) to the Program Chair by **November 1** of his/her fourth year.

If a student fails either the written or oral portion of the comprehensive exam twice, the student is dismissed from program.

Dissertation Requirements and Procedures

For a Dissertation, the committee is composed of a minimum of 5 committee members, including the Dissertation Advisor, 3 additional ADA faculty members, and 1 member from outside either Psychology Department. Of the three additional ADA members, one faculty member must be from the other University.

Deadlines for Dissertation

The deadline for completing the Dissertation proposal defense is **April 1** of the fourth year. Students must schedule the committee meeting and distribute the proposal document to the members of their committee at least two weeks in advance of the committee meeting.

Students must obtain the signatures of their advisor, committee members, and the Chair of the ADA Program at their university. This completed form is due to the Chair of the ADA Program at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense meeting, and no later than **March 15** ([APPENDIX E: DISSERTATION FORMS](#)).

Any deviation from the above deadlines must be petitioned in writing (please get form online) no later than **March 1** of a student's first year (for Proposal) or a student's second year (for Defense).

Students can also refer to [APPENDIX B: PROGRAM MILESTONES CHECKLIST](#) to keep track of their progress through the program.

Brown Bags and Colloquia

Graduate students are required to attend all Brown Bags and Colloquia. The purpose of brown bags is to give students an opportunity to formally present research to faculty and their peers and receive feedback. Brown bags are also instructive for students who are not presenting as examples of academic presentation styles.

Each cohort will be designated to present at least twice throughout their graduate training. Dates for brown bags will be distributed during the first week of classes each semester. If there is an emergency or teaching obligation that interferes with a student's ability to attend a brown bag, his/her advisor and Program Chair must be notified *prior* to the event. If a student cannot make the brown bag in which he/she is scheduled to present, then he/she must present at the next brown bag.

Periodically, the faculty will distribute information about colloquia on topics relevant to the ADA program. Students are expected to attend colloquia as these provide additional training and learning opportunities.

Additional Research Opportunities

Established relationships with Cleveland-area medical and research institutions allow students to gain experience in more applied research settings.

Program Evaluation of Students

All ADA students will undergo a formal yearly review in which they will complete the End of Year Graduate Student Evaluation Form (found in **APPENDIX F: END OF YEAR EVALUATION FORMS**), meet with their advisor, and then provide a fully-signed-off copy and CV to their respective Program Chair no later than **5 p.m. April 30**.

Each student is evaluated by the program committee based on his/her academic performance, research and/or teaching activity, degree progress, and professional conduct.

More specifically, in the spring of each year, every graduate student must prepare a written self-examination that includes (at minimum):

- a. Grades in content courses for the last year
- b. Research progress
- c. Teaching and other appropriate experiences
- d. A curriculum vita
- e. Professional/departmental contributions

This self-evaluation will be prompted by the student's program area chair, and the materials must be given to the student's advisor prior to evaluation by the whole committee in the student's area. Failure to provide this evaluation constitutes inadequate progress and may result in loss of assistantship or dismissal. Feedback based on an

evaluation of the student's progress will be given to each student regarding performance in graduate classes, performance in required research activity (e.g., thesis/thesis waiver and dissertation); teaching proficiency (or other assistantship responsibilities), performance in additional, non-required research activity (e.g., presentations, publications, assistance with grant proposals, etc.), and professional development (e.g., student initiative and independence, program/department citizenship, etc.).

Students will be evaluated on meeting program milestones, coursework, research productivity, teaching responsibilities, and professional development and/or service activities. The full faculty will formally discuss each student's progress to date along with directive feedback. Each student will then meet with his/her Advisor and the Program Chair to discuss and develop new goals for the upcoming academic year.

Faculty Advising

Students are encouraged to work closely with their primary advisor for guidance, direction, and feedback for their career development. Students also should feel comfortable seeking advising from Program Chairs and other ADA faculty. It is the responsibility of the student to seek assistance or help when needed.

In addition to working with their primary advisor, students may benefit from working with other ADA faculty at either university. Additionally, students' research interests may change while in the program and as such, students are able to switch their primary advisors and work with faculty from either University (see [APPENDIX G: ADVISOR SWITCH FORM](#)).

Regulations for Academic Status

Standards for Academic Performance

We follow the policies relevant to the program as outlined by the CSU and Akron Graduate School Handbooks. These state that the Dean of Graduate Studies at each respective university may dismiss anyone who fails to make satisfactory progress toward declared goals or who accumulates 6 semester credits of C+/B- or below; 3 semester credits of F. Mandatory dismissal can result from 6 semester hours of F; 9 semester hours of B- or below and a GPA less than 3.0¹³.

Within the program, student performance is evaluated annually with the program's Student Evaluation Criteria. To maintain eligibility for the ADA program, all students must make acceptable progress toward their degree and attain at least a 3.0 GPA in their content courses each year. Content courses include all required and elective courses which are counted toward the student's degree requirements. The calculation of this GPA is credit-weighted. Students who fall below this GPA in a given year are considered to be on "probation" in the program and must attain a 3.0 GPA in their courses in the following year. Students who fall below this GPA in two of their first three years will be dismissed from the program. For purposes of this policy, a year refers to the period from June 1 to May 31. Part-time students or students on leave must meet an equivalent requirement that will be determined by the student's advisor and area committee in consultation with the student.

Any student receiving a grade of C+ or below in any graduate course will be required to do remedial work in that course. Such remedial work will be planned in discussion with the course instructor and the student's advisor. The student will prepare a written summary of the remedial plan to be signed by the student, the instructor, and the advisor, and following that, it must be approved by the Program Chair. If the remedial work includes retaking the course, both the original and retake grade will be used in computing GPAs. However, no course may be counted more than once toward degree requirements. No course may be repeated more than once, and a course may only be repeated if the original grade is C+ or below.

¹³ This is currently in the process of being changed from 3.0 to 3.25 via a curriculum change process at each university.

Dismissal Policy

Students making unsatisfactory academic progress will be dismissed from their respective graduate programs. For purposes of dismissal, unsatisfactory academic progress is defined as follows:

Optional dismissal

If in a 400-800 level course, a student receives:

- a. one grade of F, or
- b. two grades of less than B-, or
- c. two grades of NS,

then the individual **MUST** be reviewed by the Program Committee to determine the student's ability to continue in graduate school. If the Program Committee determines that dismissal is in order, this recommendation is made to the Dean of Graduate Studies of the student's respective University for review and notification of the student.

Academic warning

If it is determined that the student may continue in the program, the Program Committee will notify the Dean of Graduate Studies and the student, in writing, regarding the grounds under which continuation is possible. In addition, an "Academic Warning" notice will be recorded on the student's official grade report for that semester.

Mandatory dismissal

Mandatory dismissal from the program can result from any one of the following:

In 400-800 level courses a student receives

- a. two F grades
- b. accumulation of nine credit hours of B- or less grades
- c. below 3.00 GPA in coursework (excluding thesis, dissertation, and independent courses) persisting for two consecutive semesters

For general program requirements a student

- a. has two consecutive terms of probationary academic status
- b. has two failures of the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination
- c. fails to maintain a 3.5 GPA in content courses for two of their first three years.

The procedure for academic dismissal is as follows: (1) the Program Chair or student's advisor will make a written recommendation for academic dismissal to program faculty; (2) the program faculty will review the student's performance and vote on the Program Chair's or advisor's recommendation; (3) if a majority of the

program faculty agree with the recommendation, the Program Chair must make a written recommendation to the department chair, stating the reason(s) for academic dismissal; (4) the department chair, if he/she agrees with the recommendation, will send a letter to the student informing him/her of the recommendation; (5) the student will have 21 days from the date of the letter to resign, petition for reconsideration, or be dismissed from the program; (6) if the student does not respond within 21 days, the department chair will make a written recommendation for dismissal to the Dean of Graduate Studies, stating the reason(s) for academic dismissal.

As stated above, students recommended for dismissal may petition for reconsideration. The procedure is as follows: (1) the petition must be signed by the student and acknowledged by his/her advisor, stating the reason(s) for requesting reconsideration; (2) the student or advisor must submit the petition to the Program Chair; (3) the Program Chair will consult with the other Program Chair and form a panel consisting of at least one member from each program; (4) the panel will review the program committee's decision and the student's academic performance and vote on the initial dismissal decision; (5) if a majority of the panel agree with the dismissal, the panel will make a written recommendation to the department chair; (6) the department chair, if he/she agrees with the recommendation, will send a letter to the student informing him/her of the recommendation; (7) the student will have 14 days from the date of the letter to resign; (8) if the student does not resign within 14 days, the department chair will make a written recommendation for dismissal to the Dean of Graduate Studies, stating the reason(s) for academic dismissal.

Re-admission

An academically dismissed student who is readmitted to the program will again be dismissed by the Graduate College if the individual receives in 400-800-level courses:

- a. One or more grades of F, or
- b. Two grades of B- or less

A graduate student who receives a second academic dismissal is not eligible for further graduate study within the program or respective University.

Re-admission procedures

An academically dismissed student who has been separated from the respective University for twelve or more months may request permission to be re-admitted to his or her prior program. Such requests are reviewed and acted upon by the Graduate Program Committee of the unit.

An academically dismissed student who has been separated from the University for less than twelve months may petition for early re-admission. Early re-admission petitions

must provide an explanation of the factors responsible for the student's poor academic performance and present a convincing case for why he/she is now prepared to succeed. The petition should be submitted to the unit's Graduate Program Committee. The committee shall act on the petition and present a step-by-step academic "game plan" that will lead to the completion of the program. The plan presented must have the full support of the student's Graduate Program. The petition, recommendations and "game plan" will be presented to the College of Graduate Studies Petitions Committee, whose decision shall be final.

Time Limit and Enrollment Requirements

Consistent with the time limits and requirements stated in the Graduate Handbooks for each University, the program expects that students complete degree requirements within a reasonable period of time. All doctoral requirements must be completed within 10 years of starting coursework. This refers to graduate work after receipt of a master's degree or the completion of 30 semester credits or whichever comes earlier. Extensions of up to one year may be granted by the Graduate School under unusual circumstances upon written request of the student and recommendation by the advisor and department chair.

If a student fails to submit a final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate School within four years of successfully meeting the comprehensive exam requirement, that student will be required to retake the exam.

Students should consult with their advisor and notify the department/program in writing of any proposed changes in their status (e.g., withdrawal from classes, change from full- to part-time student, non-registration during a semester, etc.).

In order to continue working with faculty toward a degree and in order to remain in good standing with the Graduate School, students (once they begin working on thesis, thesis waiver project, and/or dissertation) must register for a minimum of one credit hour each fall and spring semester until all degree requirements are met. Summer enrollment is required if the student is planning a summer graduation. It is the student's responsibility to maintain continuous registration. *Failure to register continuously without receiving prior program approval for a leave of absence will result in a student being dropped from his or her degree program.*

It is expected that most graduate students will continue their studies and research during the summer. This is an excellent time to engage in thesis, dissertation, or other research.

Procedures for Course Waiver/Exemption/Substitution Petitions

- a. See **APPENDIX H: PETITION FOR WAIVER OF COURSE/TRANSFER OF CREDIT**. Petitions must be written by the student and acknowledged with the student's advisor's signature.
- b. All petitions should be addressed to the chair of the program committee prior to circulation. He/she will make sure that (a) the course(s) in question are on the student's transcript; if these courses are not on the transcript, the petition will be returned to the student's advisor, and (b) the necessary approvals—from the advisor and course instructor(s), if necessary—and documentation are attached. If the petition is in order, the graduate secretary will stamp an acknowledgment on the petition, copy it, and deliver it to the Program Chair for approval and circulation.
- c. Petitions involving course waiver/exemption must first be approved and signed by the faculty member in whose jurisdiction the course lies. If the petition is for an elective course not directly comparable to what is offered in the respective Psychology Departments, this step is not necessary. Students are expected to complete all courses listed as required or petition in advance for course substitution.
- d. Course waiver/exemption/substitution petitions, which involve transfer work, must have the syllabus for the course attached. The petition should state the (a) school at which the course was taken, (b) course name, (c) course number, (d) term in which the course was taken, (e) number of credit hours, and (f) grade received. The petition should be written with reference to the respective Graduate School Handbook in effect when the student entered, indicating the correct category in which the course will be applied.
- e. As a final step, the Program Chair will write a memo to the student documenting the decision. A copy of this memo will be sent to the Graduate School, and if the petition involves transfer work, the area chair will write a memo to the Dean of the Graduate School requesting that the courses be transferred.

Students Entering with Master's Degree

Students entering with a master's degree who completed an empirical study in adulthood and aging as part of their master's degree requirements (i.e., a research thesis) may petition to transfer their master's thesis to this program. The student's advisor and 2 other readers, one from each university, will read the thesis and determine whether the thesis meets the standard of quality in the program.

In addition to program, department, and graduate school approval detailed below separately for each institution, students who wish to transfer credits from a previous

institution to the Adult Development and Aging program must meet the following minimum requirements:

1. All graduate transfer credit must have been earned at an accredited graduate college or university.
2. A student seeking transfer credit must have full admission and be in good academic standing at The University Akron/Cleveland State University and the school in which the credits were earned.
3. All transfer credit must be at the "A" or "B" level (4.00 to 3.00) in graduate courses.
4. The credits must be relevant to the student's program as determined by the student's academic department.
5. A student who seeks to enroll in courses elsewhere for transfer credit here must receive prior approval.
6. Transfer credit shall not be recorded until a student has completed 12 semester credits at The University of Akron/Cleveland State University with a grade-point average of 3.00 or better.
7. Transfer credit from other institutions will not be computed as part of a student's University of Akron/Cleveland State University grade-point average.
8. Individual course transfer of credit must fall within the time limit to complete degree requirements of the program (6 years for master's/10 years for doctoral).
9. A block transfer of credit does not apply toward the student's time limit.

The University of Akron

Students accepted into the Ph.D. Program with a Master's Degree will have 34 credits transferred; however, the expectation will be that the student will be required to participate in our full curriculum and thesis requirements. Students can request an exception to this by demonstrating that certain coursework they have already had can be substituted for a required course in the program. In order to do this, paper work must be completed that includes the instructor of the course, the advisor and the Program Chair signing off on the petition. See **APPENDIX H: PETITION FOR WAIVER OF COURSE/TRANSFER OF CREDIT**.

No more than 1/3 of the total credits required for a master's degree may be transferred from an accredited college or university. Up to one-half of the total credits above the baccalaureate required in a doctoral program may be transferred from an accredited college or university. No more than 30 semester credits may be transferred from a single master's degree.

Because students with a master's degree have already accrued 34 graduate credit hours from another institution, the student and the advisor should monitor the cumulative credit hours to ensure they do not exceed 173 credit hours. Once a student researches 174 cumulative credit hours, even if the credit hours from the previous institution do not count toward the requirements of the current degree program, the student is no longer eligible to receive a graduate assistantship that is

funded by the graduate school allocated monies.

Cleveland State University

Transfer credit cannot exceed 9 graduate semester hours for master's degree students, and 1/3 of the total hours required for doctoral degree students. Students must complete the Graduate Credit Transfer Form found on the [College of Graduate Studies Downloadable Forms page](#).

Class and Department Examinations

Students are required to appear for all their scheduled class examinations and for any scheduled Specialty or Comprehensive examinations. If a student must miss a scheduled examination (Specialty or Comprehensive Examination), the student must notify the examination committee who will review medical and other documentation regarding reasons for absence from an exam and present a recommendation to the faculty. It is the student's responsibility to meet eligibility requirements when registering for Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination. Requirements for the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination include: 1) maintenance of a 3.5 GPA in content courses each year for at least two of the first three years in the program; 2) 3.00 GPA overall; 3) completion of M.A. thesis or thesis waiver; and 4) completion of other specified program requirements.

Leave of Absence

Students who want to take a leave of absence from the department must petition the program area faculty. The petition should include the reason for the requested leave and its anticipated duration. Students should be aware that a departmental leave of absence does not alter graduate school timelines for degree completion.

Degree Progress

Recommended progress is defined as follows for fall entrance students in the full-time program:

Thesis and Thesis Waiver

April 1st of the first year—M.A. proposal accepted and on file

April 1st of second year—written draft of completed research project submitted to review committee.

To keep on track, you should begin thinking of topics and develop a problem statement as early as possible. Also, keep in mind that an acceptable proposal may involve only a 5-15-page problem statement with hypotheses and a methods section. The full literature review may be done later. You should meet with your advisor as early as possible in your graduate career to discuss research ideas.

Dissertation

April 1 of fourth year—proposal accepted and on file

It is expected that students entering the program with a B.A. should complete both the M.A. and Ph.D. programs within **five** years. Those entering the program with an M.A. should complete the Ph.D. program within **four** years.

UNACCEPTABLE progress will be defined according to the following timetable:

Thesis and Thesis Waiver

April 1st of second year—proposal not yet accepted by committee

April 1st of third year—thesis not yet completed

Dissertation

January of 5th year—proposal not yet accepted

January of 6th year—dissertation not yet completed

Consequences of unacceptable progress may include formal letters noting unacceptable progress, which will be put in the student's file as part of usual, yearly evaluations of graduate students.

Financial Assistance

Graduate research and teaching assistantships, and internships are available. Graduate research and teaching assistantships involve commitment of approximately 20 hours per week beginning fall semester through the end of spring semester. Typically these assistantships are for a 9 month period so there is no stipend in the summer, but a tuition waiver for the summer following the assistantship is included. Research assistantships are derived primarily from external funding obtained by individual faculty members.

CSU

Continuing students must request consideration for assistantship reappointment/appointment by submitting a Graduate Assistantship Application Form with an updated C.V. to the Psychology Department prior to April 1 of each year. Appointments/reappointments are made competitively based on degree progress and other factors (e.g., funds available, student expertise).

UA

Because assistantship assignments at UA are tied to our annual budgeting cycle, we must renew assistantship contracts on a yearly basis. However, our philosophy is to provide doctoral students with at least four years of on-going support if possible. This support is typically in the form of a nine-month stipend and a full, year-long, tuition waiver, although it may also take the form of a paid internship. We have been quite successful at this goal in the past and anticipate also being so in the future. In addition to the stipend that covers the Fall and Spring semesters, in previous years most of our doctoral students have also been able to get summer support through sources such as work-study assignments to department faculty, departmental teaching or research, and consulting or internship projects.

Students are responsible for monitoring their enrollment status. After completion of 174 credit hours they are ineligible (per the Graduate School) for further GA funding.

GA/TA Roles and Responsibilities

Students are assigned assistantships by the department. Graduate assistantships may consist of conducting research with a faculty member or administrative work. Teaching

assistantships may require supporting the instructor-of-record with grading, teaching, record-keeping, curriculum development, etc. or students may be assigned as the instructor-of-record. In all cases, students should meet early and regularly with their faculty supervisor to ensure they are meeting the expectations of the role. The standard assistantship is 20 hours per week of work.

University of Akron

Students in their first year are conventionally assigned to teach 1 section of Introductory to Psychology each semester (please note: some students who are funded through a faculty research grant or who work in the Lifespan Institute may not teach). In the student's second and third year, he/she will likely teach Introductory to Psychology or TA one of our larger or more work intensive courses, under the direct supervision of a faculty member (e.g., Experimental Psychology, Developmental Psychology). For post-comprehensive exam students, their own section of quantitative methods, developmental psychology, or another 200-300 level undergraduate course will become options for their teaching assignments in addition to those that were available to them in previous years. These teaching assignments are expected to be managed in addition to all research and coursework responsibilities.

Employment

All graduate students in the Department of Psychology are required to become actively engaged in research and/or teaching activities as part of their graduate training. Therefore, graduate students receiving university assistantships may not be employed outside the assistantship when school is in session. Any outside employment activities should be planned in consultation with the faculty advisor and/or area chair. This expectation applies to all students regardless of specialty area, degree option, or graduate assistant status.