

Cognitive Area Requirements for Graduate Students
(Version of June, 2008)

Dept. of Psychology
Rutgers University - New Brunswick

1. Coursework

Requirements of the Graduate School and Psychology Department. The Graduate School requires 30 credits to earn the Master's degree, of which 6 are normally devoted to thesis research courses (701,702). For the Ph.D., 72 credits are required; the Psychology Department requires that of these a minimum of 48 are in non-research courses and 24 in research. Full-time students must register for at least 9 credits each semester, including research credits. Students who have completed the Qualifying Exam must register for at least 1 credit per semester. Teaching assistantships and graduate assistantships entail 6 e-credits; students in these positions may normally register for a maximum of 9 additional credits, giving a maximum total of 15.

Requirements of the Cognitive Area. The Cognitive Area requires that the following courses be completed by the end of the third year.

(A) Statistics or quantitative courses. Students are required to complete:

- Research Design & Analysis I Psychology 521
- One additional Statistics/Quantitative course, either
 - Research Design and Analysis II Psychology 522
 - or - Mathematical Models of Learning, Perception, Cognition Psychology 540
 - or - Another Statistics/Quantitative course by petition to the Area Coordinator

(B) Core courses. By the end of the third year, students are required to complete 4 core courses chosen from the following list:

- Sensation & Perception Psychology 514
- Computational Perception Psychology 515
- Psychology of Decision Making Psychology 534
- Memory & Attention Psychology 546
- Computational Models of Cognition Psychology 547
- Language Development Psychology 550
- Development of Cognitive Processes Psychology 554
- Psycholinguistics Psychology 602

The remaining course credits comprise elective courses chosen from offerings within and outside the department. These courses should be selected in consultation with the principal faculty advisor and other faculty to contribute to the student's overall training in his or her area of specialization.

Students may also undertake the Certificate in Cognitive Science offered by the Center for Cognitive Science (RuCCS); as well as the Core Curriculum in Perceptual Science. Interested students should consult the relevant units (respectively RuCCS and the Perceptual Science program) for further information.

2. Master's Thesis

A Master's Thesis is required, and is normally completed by the end of the second year. The Master's committee consists of three members of the graduate faculty in Psychology, including the primary faculty advisor. The committee is intended to guide as well as to evaluate research, and students are encouraged to form the committee as early as possible, but certainly by the end of the first year.

A brief oral presentation of Master's Thesis work, serving as an oral defense, is normally given in the Spring of the second year. The written thesis should be completed and approved by the committee prior to the start of the third year.

3. Qualifying Exam

The Qualifying Exam committee consists of four members of the graduate faculty in Psychology, including the primary faculty advisor. Students are encouraged to form this committee as soon as their Master's Thesis is completed.

The Qualifying Exam should be completed by late in the Fall of the third year, with committee approval (including revisions) achieved by the end of the Fall semester. The Exam has two parts:

- A critical review of the literature in a selected area of research. The topic of the review along with an outline should be approved by the members of the committee before the review is undertaken.
- Two lectures (on distinct topics) presented to an undergraduate course in either cognition or perception, to be supervised by the primary faculty advisor and observed (live or via a recording) by members of the Qualifying Exam committee. Lecture notes and recordings of the two lectures should be submitted to the committee. Ideally, these lectures will be given during the Fall semester of the third year, but practical considerations such as course schedules dictate some flexibility and some advance planning.

4. Doctoral Thesis

The doctoral thesis should be completed by the end of the fifth year, though students are encouraged to aim for earlier completion. The Dissertation Committee has four members: three members of the graduate faculty in Psychology, including the primary faculty advisor, and one "outside" member not on the graduate faculty of Psychology (possibly from another university). Students should submit a brief letter explaining the choice of outside member and a copy of the proposed outside member's curriculum vitae with the committee form submitted to the department. Students are encouraged to form the Dissertation Committee as soon as their Qualifying Exam is completed, and provide the committee with a brief written thesis proposal. A public oral defense of the dissertation is required.

5. Where to go for help

Questions about these requirements or timetables should be directed to the primary faculty advisor or the area coordinator. Questions about Department or university policies can be directed to the Psychology Graduate office. Students will receive annual letters evaluating their progress in the program. These letters, issued by the Area Coordinator in consultation with the primary faculty advisor and other faculty, provide an opportunity for students to address any issues that may be impeding their progress through the cognitive program.