

FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL PROGRAM FIRST DOCTORAL EXAM PROCEDURES

Objectives:

The main objective of the First Doctoral Exam is for the student to demonstrate a depth of knowledge in the field of psychology and to demonstrate an ability to conduct scientific research. This knowledge will be demonstrated through both written and oral presentations. Therefore, an additional objective of the First Doctoral Exam is the development of scholarly written and oral presentation skills.

Timing of the First Doctoral Examination:

The First Doctoral Exam must be completed by students prior to finishing 45 credits of coursework, including any transfer credits awarded. If the First Doctoral Exam is not completed by the time 45 credits are earned, the student will not be permitted by CUNY to enroll in any more courses before this requirement is met. Students will proceed from Level 1 to Level 2 after passing the First Doctoral Exam AND earning at least 45 credits.

The First Doctoral Exam will consist of two parts: 1) a written paper and 2) an oral presentation of the written paper. The oral presentations will be in a “brown bag” format that is open to the entire Forensic Psychology doctoral faculty and student body. Each student will be evaluated on this work by a committee of three doctoral faculty members, selected by the student or recommended by his or her advisor. The three committee members will be required to read and comment on the written papers.

Requirements for the First Doctoral Examination:

There are three alternatives for the successful completion of the First Doctoral Exam.

1. Completed Master’s thesis from a psychology program or from a related discipline.

To fulfill the First Doctoral Exam requirement with this alternative, students having completed Master’s degrees with theses will be required to submit their thesis to the Program for review. Theses from other programs will be accepted as fulfilling the first doc requirement of the Forensic Psychology Doctoral Program if they are research based, relevant to psychology and/or law, and are deemed to be of an appropriate level of scholarship by the Program. The goal of approving already completed Master’s theses is solely to determine if the thesis constitutes a scientific research project, not to grade the quality of the project. Once the written portion of the thesis is approved, students will be given the opportunity to give an oral presentation of this research to their fellow students and the faculty.

2. Completion of a manuscript for a research project with original data analysis.

To fulfill the First Doctoral Exam requirement with this alternative, students will be required to write a manuscript-style paper reporting on the results of an empirical research project. This research project can be either work on his or her advisors pre-existing research or on the student's own research project. Students writing up the results of ongoing research in their advisors' research labs should have taken some responsibility for the completion of the research project, even if the original research question, design, and hypotheses were generated by their advisor. The level of responsibility will be as deemed appropriate by the advisor but must include original data analysis by the student. The literature review, methods write-up, results, and discussion should be substantially the work of the student. Students will also be permitted to satisfy this alternative for the First Doctoral Exam by conducting an empirical research project of their own design. After the paper is read by the committee, the student will be required to complete and oral presentation of the paper.

3. Completion of a theoretical or critical thinking paper reviewing an area of psychology which ties that area into the rest of the field as a whole.

To fulfill the First Doctoral Exam requirement with this alternative, students will be required to write a theoretical or critical thinking paper. This paper should investigate the research in an area of psychology in depth, and discuss the relationship of this area of research to the broader field of psychology. The topic of the paper is to be determined by the student, the student's advisor, and/or the committee. The goal of this paper should be to produce a publishable quality paper examining topic area that could later be converted into a non-dissertation research project. After the paper is read by the committee, the student will be required to complete and oral presentation of the paper.

Outcomes of the First Doctoral Examination.

First Doctoral Examinations will be graded on a pass/fail basis. In order to complete the First Doctoral Exam requirement, the student must earn a "pass" from a majority of his or her First Doctoral Exam committee on the written component of the exam. If a student does not receive a "pass" from a majority of his or her committee, the committee will suggest reasonable revisions to the project. The student will be required to re-submit the project with revisions to the committee for its consideration.

Withdrawl from the Program will be required if the student fails to pass this requirement within the following time constraints. If the student does not pass the First Doctoral Examination by the time the student earns 45 credits, the student will not be permitted to enroll in any additional classes in the Program until the First Doctoral Exam is completed. Students will only be permitted to continue in the Program for 1 year with 45 credits and without taking classes. If the First Doctoral Exam is not completed at the end of this year, the student will be required to withdraw from the Program.