

General Doctoral Examination

Doctoral students in the Clinical Psychology Ph.D. program must pass a general doctoral examination (GDE) to advance to doctoral candidacy. Students are eligible to take the GDE after defense of their master's thesis and completion of one year of supervised clinical training at the Auburn University Psychological Services Center. The GDE involves the student developing a portfolio that contains: 1) one first-authored, manuscript submitted for publication, 2) the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) research experiences and interests, theoretical orientation, and diversity essays, and 3) a written demonstration of the student's case conceptualization skills. Following successful completion of the written portfolio, the student will need to pass an oral defense.

1) First-authored Manuscript. As part of the preliminary doctoral examination process, all students must submit a first-authored manuscript for review to a peer-reviewed journal. Peer-reviewed book chapters are also permissible. This manuscript may be based on an empirical study or a review of a research area. The nature of the manuscript is to be decided by the student in conjunction with their major professor. The manuscript cannot be completed or worked on prior to the date that the graduate student was admitted to the program (i.e., project conceptualization/development and writing). It may involve collaboration with faculty and peers; however, the student must be the principal author of the written product. The project must be separate from the student's thesis (e.g., it cannot be the publication version of student's thesis) or dissertation proposal. Regardless of the type of project selected by the student, the written product must be of the length and format appropriate for submission to a peer-reviewed professional journal or book chapter. If the manuscript has been accepted for publication (with appropriate documentation), the committee will not review it in detail other than to ensure it meets the criteria stated above. However, the student must be prepared to answer questions about the manuscript during the oral defense. If the manuscript has not been accepted for publication, then it must be submitted to a professional journal or book for peer review, and documentation of submission must be provided. Unpublished manuscripts will be thoroughly reviewed and critiqued by the student's qualifying examination committee.

2) Three APPIC Essays. The format of the three APPIC essays (i.e., research experiences and interests, theoretical orientation, and diversity) should be identical to what is submitted as part of the APPIC internship application (i.e., in response to the essay prompts [APPIC provides](#)). Each essay should not exceed 500 words. Although it is permissible for students to review example essays from more senior students and/or program alumni as a model, students should be sure not to plagiarize (i.e. these essays must reflect the student's own work). These essays must be completed independently, without the aid of the student's major professor, other faculty, fellow students, or anyone else.

3) Case Conceptualization Essay. Students must select a therapy case that they have had within the past three years. The following must be outlined: (1) their conceptualization of the primary and associated problems and the research that informs it; (2) relevant assessment procedures and the research that informs their selection of them; (3) the process and outcome of intervention and the research that informs them; (4) ethical **and** cultural issues related to the above. Students should not limit themselves to what was actually done; where relevant, they

should discuss other choices that could have been made, the rationale for these choices, and the possible outcomes that might have occurred. This essay must demonstrate competency in “Advanced Integrative Knowledge of Basic Discipline-Specific Content Area.” In doing so, the answer must integrate graduate-level knowledge from at least two of the following content areas: affective, biological, cognitive, social, and developmental. On the title page of the case conceptualization, the student should indicate which content areas they have incorporated into their response.

Students are required to fully de-identify their answer prior to submission; see guidance at the end of this document. The full response must be no longer than 15 double-spaced pages (1-inch margins, Times New Roman, Size 12 font), not including the title page, figures or diagrams, or references. If the response is longer than the page limit, it will be designated as a failure, and the student will be required to rewrite the response to fit within the designated page limit. Although it is permissible for students to review example case conceptualization essays from more senior students and/or program alumni as a model, students should be sure not to plagiarize (i.e. these essays must reflect the student’s own work). This essay must be completed independently, without the aid of the student’s major professor, other faculty, fellow students, or anyone else.

GDE Timeline and Evaluation

As described, students are eligible to take the GDE after defense of their master’s thesis and completion of one year of supervised clinical training at the Auburn University Psychological Services Center. The purpose of the portfolio is to show the readiness of the student to conduct the doctoral dissertation. The student should discuss their readiness to submit the qualifying portfolio with their major professor. The student is responsible for preparing the portfolio for review by the Director of Clinical Training (DCT) without the aid from faculty, fellow students, or anyone else. When the portfolio is complete, it should be submitted via email as one pdf file to the DCT, with the major professor cc’ed. If the first-authored manuscript is unpublished, then the student must state in their email that it has been sent out for peer review. The professional journal and date of submission should be reported as well.

The GDE portfolio will be reviewed by three randomly selected tenure-track clinical faculty members (not the major professor). One of the three committee members will be randomly assigned as the chair of the committee. The committee members will independently evaluate the qualifying portfolio. The committee must unanimously decide the student is ready to move on to the dissertation OR make recommendations to remediate any deficiencies. The chair of the committee will notify the student and the DCT of the committee’s decision via email. If revisions are required, then the student must resubmit the portfolio to the chair of their evaluation committee. The student will be given one week to revise each essay that the committee identifies as needing revision. For example, if the committee determines that the APPIC diversity essay and the case conceptualization essay need to be revised, the student will have two weeks to revise these documents and resubmit them to the chair of the committee. The student's evaluation committee will have two weeks from receipt of the revisions to come to a final decision and notify the student. A copy of the committee's report will be sent to the student, the student’s

major professor, and the DCT by the chair of the committee. If revision is required, the chair of the evaluation committee will notify the student, the student's major professor, and the DCT when all requirements have been met and the student has passed. Revisions to the APPIC Essays and Case Conceptualization Essays must be completed independently by the student. Revisions to the first-authored manuscript may be completed in consultation with others, at the discretion of the GDE committee (i.e. the student should consult with the committee to determine whether consultation with others is appropriate, given the specific nature of the requested revisions).

A student who fails the written examination upon retaking will not be recommended for admission into the doctoral program. Upon passing the written examination, the student should plan to hold the oral examination, which requires approval in advance by the Graduate School (i.e. official paperwork must be submitted). **The GDE must be passed by the last day of final exams of the spring term for the student to apply for internship the following fall.**

Eligible students can submit a completed portfolio for consideration at two times during the academic year: in the first two weeks of the Fall semester or in the first two weeks of the Spring semester. Formation of the evaluation committee, review process, and initial feedback to the student will occur within three weeks after the submission.

Oral Defense

Students will be required to schedule an oral defense once they pass the written portfolio, in accordance with the Department of Psychological Sciences General Doctoral Examination Policy (please see the Auburn University Department of Psychological Sciences General Doctoral Examination Policy (Passed on March 31, 2016) document, Section 7). The oral defense should ordinarily be scheduled within two weeks of successfully passing the written portfolio. At the oral defense, the student should prepare a 20-minute presentation of either the 1) 1st authored manuscript, or 2) case conceptualization essay. During the oral defense, the student should be prepared to answer methodological, procedural, conceptual, and analytical questions and discussion points regarding their work. Although the oral defense will focus on one of the two written submissions noted above, the student should be prepared to answer questions about all of the written submissions that make up the final portfolio. Should the student fail the oral defense, proceedings outlined in Section 7 of the Department's GDE Policy will be followed.

De-Identifying Case Material

Be careful to fully de-identify your case conceptualization by removing/changing the following:

- Names
 - Geographic subdivisions smaller than a state (this includes street address, city, county, precinct, zip code)
 - **This also includes the name of the clinic in which they were seen**
 - All elements of dates (except year) for dates directly related to an individual. This includes:
 - Birth date
 - Admission date
 - Discharge date
 - Date of death
 - All ages over 89 (just say “90 or older” in these cases)
 - Telephone numbers
 - Fax numbers
 - E-mail addresses
 - Social security numbers
 - Medical record numbers
 - Health plan beneficiary numbers
 - Account numbers
 - Certificate/license numbers
 - Vehicle identifiers (including license plates)
 - Device identifiers
 - Photographic images
 - Any unique identifying number (**This includes file numbers from our clinic**)
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- In general, do not include any identifying information that is not necessary for your case conceptualization