

MASTER OF ARTS IN PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology offers the Master of Arts degree via the BA/MA program. Upon successful completion of the BA degree requirements, students become graduate students for two semesters and complete the MA. There is no stand-alone MA program in Psychology; the combined BA/MA program is only available to Wesleyan students.

The BA/MA program involves a close working relationship between a student and a faculty advisor who will supervise the research through the conclusion of the MA degree. Students have to be accepted by a faculty mentor before applying to the program. Non-psychology students can apply to the program to work under the mentorship of a psychology faculty, but need to demonstrate preparation for advanced study and research in psychology.

Courses

The MA in Psychology requires a minimum of 6 credits above the 32 credits needed for the BA. These courses include:

- PSYC 549 & 550: Thesis Research/Advanced Research Seminar (2 credits; one credit per term of second year).
- Four credits for advanced coursework: Any other graduate tutorials (PSYC 501/502, 503/504, 511/512; these can be taken during the undergraduate or graduate year), undergraduate tutorials taken for graduate credit (specifically, 401/402, 411/412, or 421/422; these can be taken only during the undergraduate year), undergraduate non-tutorial courses in any department (usually 200- or 300-level courses) taken for graduate credit, or graduate seminars. No more than *two* of these four credits may come from tutorials.
- Note that teaching assistantships of any kind may *not* be used for graduate credit.

In order for any course to be counted towards the graduate degree, the following conditions must be met.

1. It must not have been counted towards the undergraduate Psychology major or minor as declared on the Major Certification Form or towards any Wesleyan undergraduate graduation requirements.
2. It must be taken for graduate credit.
3. A grade of a B- or better must be earned in the course. Courses taken Pass/Fail cannot be counted towards the degree.
4. The course needs to be reasonably related to the MA thesis student's research. If the course is not directly related to the research project, it needs to make a well-justified contribution to a MA course of study.

All degree-seeking graduate students are required to register for at least one credit in each semester that they are enrolled in the university.

With the approval of the faculty mentor and BA/MA committee, students can apply extra credits from the BA years to the MA degree.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

No language requirement.

PROGRESS AND QUALIFYING EXAMS

The faculty mentor and psychology BA/MA committee review student progress in courses and thesis research.

TEACHING

No teaching required.

RESEARCH

Students are expected to spend at least 20 hours per week engaged in research. The research experience culminates with an MA thesis demonstrating a student's original contribution to knowledge in the field. Many students in the BA/MA program choose not to write an undergraduate honors thesis because they will be writing a more substantial MA thesis.

Ethics approval is required prior to initiating data collection for your research. Faculty mentors should be consulted about preparing the ethics proposal. If your proposed research poses minimal or no risk to participants, does not involve vulnerable populations, or does not include the collection of sensitive data, then you may submit a protocol for your proposed research to the Psychology Ethics Committee (<https://www.wesleyan.edu/psyc/resources/>) (via Catherine Race, administrative assistant). If you plan to conduct higher risk research, study vulnerable populations, collect sensitive data, or if your research involves other complications, then you are required to submit your protocol to the University IRB (<https://www.wesleyan.edu/acaf/support/reviewboard.html>).

THESIS AND DEFENSE

Work on the MA thesis should progress as follows under the guidance of the faculty advisor.

Developing a proposal and establishing a committee. An MA thesis committee should be established and must include the advisor and two or more additional faculty. Both the advisor and at least one of the additional faculty members must be in Psychology. The student should consult with the faculty mentor about possible committee members and guidelines for the proposal. The Psychology Department requires that students submit a proposal to the committee and meet with the committee at the beginning of the MA process.

Students are encouraged to initiate this process as soon as they have committed to the MA program; some students complete the proposal approval process in May or June, depending on the availability of the committee members. The approval process must be completed by the end of September; the deadline is for all students, including those starting their MA in the spring. By the first week of the fall semester, the student must get confirmation from committee members for a date for the committee to discuss and approve the thesis proposal (this can be done using an emailed calendar invitation once a satisfactory date is found). The committee meeting and approval of the thesis proposal should be completed by the end of September. The proposal must be sent to committee members at least two weeks before the meeting date. Student should take the Thesis Proposal Approval Form to the thesis proposal meeting and return the signed form along with a copy of the proposal to the faculty advisor immediately afterward.

Summer research. Many students find it advantageous to use the summertime to make progress on literature reviews and research. Funding is available for students who receive financial aid for the MA program. Students not on financial aid should discuss expectations and funding opportunities for summer research with their faculty mentor.

The MA year. During the MA year, the student must complete the thesis. Unlike most other rules and requirements of the program, the rules governing the completion of an MA thesis are largely determined by the University's Office of Graduate Student Services (OGSS); all of the relevant forms are included on the Graduation Requirements – MA website. All forms are electronic and accessible through WesPortal/Academics/Graduate Exit Forms. The electronic forms are automatically routed to the pertinent faculty members for their approval.

Forms required by the Office of Graduate Student Services related to completion of the thesis are available online – see Graduation Requirements-MA: at <https://www.wesleyan.edu/grad/academics/graduationrequirementsma.html>

The **final copy** of the written thesis should be given to committee members by the student at least two weeks before the oral defense date; the specific timing is up to the student's committee. Note that the OGSS has a number of formatting guidelines for preparation of the thesis that are available on the Graduation Requirements – MA website.

Oral Defense. The oral defense/examination must be held during the oral exam period designated by the OGSS. This period is usually 3.5 weeks long and begins in mid-April and ends the first week of May. The specific dates for the beginning and end of the oral exam period are posted on the University's Academic Calendar as well as in the MA exit packet. Corrections/edits from committee members must be completed before the scheduled exit interview.

The exact format of the defense varies by individual faculty in the Psychology Department. You and your advisor should decide a format that works for you and your research. The basic flow is:

You give a research presentation on your thesis.

- The length (somewhere between 15 and 45 minutes) is negotiable.
- Whether it is open (to your friends, faculty, public) or closed (just your committee) is also negotiable.
- There is an open question period after the talk.
- You leave the room while the committee deliberates.
- You return to the room to receive your grade, feedback, and (assuming things have gone as planned) congratulations.
- Your committee will let you know what revisions or corrections **MUST BE MADE** in order for the thesis to be complete and ready for submission.

You will receive separate grades for your written thesis and oral defense. These do not go on your transcript. They do stay in your file. You may decide, at some point in the future, to authorize someone (e.g., another graduate program) to access your grade.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

To apply to the program, please go to the Office of Graduate Student Services (OGSS) website. (<https://admission.wesleyan.edu/apply/>)

For additional information and all department forms, please visit Psychology Department BA/MA Guide https://www.wesleyan.edu/psyc/about/bama_guides.html