GRADUATE PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM

Psychology offers the Master of Arts degree via the BA/MA program. Students enrolled in this program, upon successful completion of the degree requirements, receive a BA after three/four years and an MA at the end of the additional year. From the perspective of the University, students are considered undergraduates during their first year of the program (the senior undergraduate year) and become graduate students in their second year of the program. However, because this is a combined degree program, in order to complete the two degrees, the student must submit a carefully devised and integrated study plan for the two years of the program at the time of application to the program.

The BA/MA program involves a close working relationship between a student and a faculty mentor. Before applying to the program, a student must have identified a faculty mentor in the Psychology Department who has agreed to direct the candidate’s two-year BA/MA research.

COURSES

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 nontutorial 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; teaching assistantships of any kind may not be used for graduate credit.

RESEARCH

A major expectation of this program is that students will spend at least 20 hours per week engaged in research. The research experience will culminate with an MA thesis demonstrating a student’s original contribution to knowledge, which the student will carry out in partial fulfillment of the degree requirements. Many students will choose not to write an undergraduate honor’s thesis during their last undergraduate year because they will be writing this more substantial MA thesis during their graduate year. While there is no prohibition against writing an undergraduate thesis should the student wish to do so, it cannot substitute in any way for the student submitting an MA thesis in their graduate year.

The research that you will be conducting for your MA thesis needs to receive ethics approval from either the Psychology Ethics Committee (https://www.wesleyan.edu/psyc/resources) or the University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Ethics approval is required prior to initiating data collection for your research. 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 (via Catherine Race, administrative assistant). For information on what you will need to submit to receive approval from this committee please visit Psychology Ethics Committee website. 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/DISSERTATION/DEFENSE

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

First Year. By the first week in April of the first year of the program (the senior undergraduate year), an MA thesis committee must be established and must include the advisor and two or more additional faculty (the student must submit the Establishment of Thesis Committee Form to the faculty advisor by this date. Both the advisor and at least one of the additional faculty members must be in Psychology. By the first week of May, the student must set the date for the committee meeting to discuss and approve the proposal Scheduling of Thesis Proposal Meeting Form submitted to the advisor. The thesis proposal should be given to the committee at least two weeks before the scheduled meeting. While the date must be agreed upon by the first week of May, the actual meeting may be held anytime before the end of June as long as the thesis proposal is approved by the committee by the end of June (student should take the Thesis Proposal Approval Form to the thesis proposal meeting, and must return it and a copy of the proposal to the faculty advisor by the end of June. All these form are available at https://www.wesleyan.edu/psyc/about/BA-MA.html).

Second Year. During the second year of the program, 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). The student needs to complete an Oral Exam Schedule Date Form and submit this form to OGSS in April. The exact date on which this form needs to be submitted to OGSS is posted in the MA Exit Packet. A copy of the Oral Exam Schedule Date Form should be turned in to the faculty advisor. A variety of other forms must also be obtained from and returned directly to the University’s OGSS. All forms are included in the MA Exit Packet that can be found 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; specific timing is up to the student’s committee.

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. The student should bring to the oral defense two forms required by the OGSS: the Oral Examination Form and an Approval of Thesis Form to be filled out by committee members. All forms are included in the MA Exit Packet that can be found at https://www.wesleyan.edu/grad/academics/graduationrequirementsma.html

The exact format of the defense has varied 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 talk presenting your research.

- The length (somewhere between 15 and 45 minutes) is negotiable.
- Open (to your friends, faculty, public) or closed (just your committee) is also negotiable.
- Open question period after the talk.
You leave the room while the committee discusses.

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 find out your grade.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

For additional information, please visit Psychology Department BA/MA information [https://www.wesleyan.edu/psyc/about/BA-MA.html](https://www.wesleyan.edu/psyc/about/BA-MA.html).