

Auburn University

Department of Psychology

General Doctoral Examination Policy

(Passed on March 31 2016)

The General Doctoral Examination (GDE) serves as an essential process by which the above goals are attained. In an effort to articulate the orientation taken by psychology faculty, the department adopted (5/98) certain goals and processes (and guiding principles) of the GDE. Specifically, the GDE should (1) promote critical and integrative thinking, (2) promote breadth and provide an opportunity to fill in gaps of knowledge, (3) be timely, (4) be circumscribed, (5) assess competence in relevant areas, (6) have "ecological validity" (with due respect to ambiguities in that phrase), and (7) meet graduate school requirements (including written and oral component)

Each criterion speaks to important components that form the basis of an incremental experience to the student's graduate education and developing professional identity. Basic policies are listed below.

1. The General Doctoral Examination (GDE) will meet the requirements of the Graduate School as expressed in the Graduate School Bulletin.
2. Graduate School requirements stipulate the formation of a doctoral advisory committee (documented by an approved plan of study) as a prerequisite for pursuing the GDE.
3. The GDE consists of written and oral components, and both components shall be overseen by the student's "Examination Committee." This committee will be comprised of the student's doctoral advisory committee members, and students' program faculty members if needed.
4. The timeframe designated for the written portion of the GDE shall begin no later than one year following the successful *defense* of the student's thesis. The final draft of the Master's thesis must be submitted to the Graduate School (including electronic submission of final draft) before the student may initiate the GDE. For students entering their program with a Master's recognized by the department, the written portion typically shall begin no later than the Fall semester of their third year. Depending on students' developmental need, the written portion may start after the 3rd year. Students who cannot meet the above deadlines due to extenuating circumstances may petition the faculty of the department, in writing, through the Department Chair/Head. This petition will initiate departmental procedures used to review students who are at risk of not remaining in good standing.
5. The Examination Committee shall be charged with ensuring that the examination process extends the student's knowledge base and evaluates the student's ability to integrate and think critically about program-related content areas, his/her developing specialization, and areas of psychology represented in the department's core curriculum.

6. Different forms of written examination are approved by the Psychology Department and determined by each graduate program.
 - a. If a student fails the written examination, the student will be permitted to retake the exam. The Examination Committee should specify a timeline for completion of the re-take, following the solicitation of feedback from members regarding suggested areas of remediation.
 - b. A student who fails the written examination upon retaking will not be recommended for admission into the doctoral program. Depending on the timing of the failed examination, steps could be taken to transition the student out of the respective graduate program. For example, arrangements could be made to complete courses in which the student is currently enrolled, maintain or finish an assistantship, or remain involved in other professional activities until as the student seeks alternative employment or educational opportunities. All such arrangement would be subject to review by the student's program and the department and would have to be consistent with graduate school policies.
 - c. A student may appeal failure of the written examination to the department Chair/Head or his/her designee within 14 days of notification of the failure. The appeal shall be investigated, with consultation from the Examination Committee and Program Director. The student shall receive a written response within 14 days of the receipt of the written appeal. Any further appeal shall be directed to the Dean of the Graduate School.

7. The oral portion of the GDE allows the Examination Committee to further review the student's understanding of research methodology and literature in his/her program. Conducting the oral examination requires approval in advance by the Graduate School. Oral examination is generally within two-four weeks following the successful completion of the written preliminary examination.
 - a. Successful completion of the oral examination requires unanimous support of the Examination Committee.
 - b. If a student fails the oral examination, re-examination may be given on the recommendation of the Examination Committee. The second administration should occur based on the recommendation of the Examination Committee or within 4 weeks of the first oral examination.
 - c. A student who fails the oral examination upon retaking will not be recommended for admission into the doctoral program. Depending on the timing of the failed examination, steps could be taken to transition the student out of the respective graduate program. For example, arrangements could be made to complete courses in which the student is currently enrolled, maintain or finish an assistantship, or remain involved in other professional activities until as the student seeks alternative employment or educational opportunities. All such arrangement would be subject to review by the student's program and the department and would have to be consistent with graduate school policies.
 - d. A student may appeal failure of the oral exam to the department Chair/Head or his/her designee within 14 days of notification of the failure. The appeal shall be investigated, with consultation from the Examination Committee and Program Director. The student shall receive a written response within 14 days of the receipt of the written appeal. Any further appeal shall be directed to the Dean of the Graduate School.