

The BA/MA Program Proposal Rutgers-Newark, Psychology

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this memorandum is to describe the rationale for establishing a BA/MA program in the Department of Psychology, Newark College of Arts and Sciences. This memorandum describes the goals of the program; an independent program track for Rutgers Psychology undergraduates leading to the terminal MA degree in their fifth year; the coursework and related training experiences required for the Master's degree; the admission and completion requirements and the potential goals of the overall program.

OVERVIEW / GOALS OF ACADEMIC PROGRAM

At present the Department of Psychology in the Newark College of Arts and Sciences houses two training programs, leading to the Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Psychology. We intend to develop a new, combined BA/MA track program that leads to a MA degree.

The need for a BA/MA Program:

First, there is significant interest among students in obtaining Master's degrees in psychology. Some students may prefer a more science-based track that allows them to apply for corporate internships in local NYC groups like GOOGLE or FACEBOOK research (we have been in discussions with FACEBOOK who have expressed willingness to provide internships for our students if they have appropriate training). Master's students could find positions as Lab Managers, or research assistants in various centers and research activities, that may eventually lead to a PhD program. Given faculty expertise, laboratory resources, the only neuroimaging center in Rutgers (RUBIC) and other resources that the Department continues to develop with new faculty and startup packages we believe that a Master's program will expand and strengthen the graduate experience within the Psychology Department and in collaboration with other Departments/Campuses.

Second, since 2006 the Psychology Department has offered an honors track for students who wish to obtain a higher level of independent research experience. This track requires students to identify faculty advisors by the close of their junior year in order to conduct thesis projects over the course of their senior year. Although this program has been successful in terms of providing enhanced training to some of our undergraduates, our faculty advisors have uniformly found that one year of this sort of training is not enough for students who wish to engage fully in the research process and see their independent projects through to completion. Having a BA/MA program option could promote earlier engagement in the research process and afford more time for sustained involvement in the research enterprise.

Third, the rapid change in the job market, especially in social media (FACEBOOK, Twitter etc.), and related corporate areas of psychological sciences (e.g., Cognitive sciences; Human Computer Interaction) suggest there would be meaningful added value for students pursuing careers in various technical areas and research support. It should also be noted that many students seeking Master's training in psychology ultimately want to pursue careers in mental health, and to be clear we are not proposing to create a clinical training curriculum. However, students who obtain academic/research-oriented master's degrees will be well prepared for other career lines requiring training in behavioral and social science, such as corporate research, research support, laboratory/technical work including human computer interaction (e.g., web design, *Android App* interface consulting) data science, as well as various types of mental health internships.

A final motivation concerns the recent merger with University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) and Rutgers creating the new Rutgers Biomedical Health Sciences (RBHS). A terminal Master's program that would allow a seamless integration of various research methods and especially with RUBIC, would enable medical research students interested in pursuing a Master's degree to be trained in Data Science/Machine Learning and Neuroimaging research.

5-year Program, Masters Planning Committee (MPC)

We are also proposing that there be a sub-committee or independent standing committee that oversees the Master's program Tracks (MPC). This also keeps the PhD program independent of the Master's tracks, which could involve many different issues independently of one another.

COMBINED BA/MA

This track will be a 5-year course of study in which students who have completed all of their requirements for the BA degree in psychology by the end of their third year can begin taking Master's-level courses and begin mentored MA research training during their fourth year, completing all BA and MA requirements by the end of the fifth year. Students would apply for this option during the fall semester of their third year. Based on internal surveys of current undergraduate majors, we anticipate that this will be a very popular option for Rutgers-Newark students leading to a highly competitive applicant pool. For motivated students, this option would replace the current option for completing a senior honors thesis in psychology.

Eligibility

Rutgers Newark Psychology majors in their junior year are eligible to apply for the program. Students must have a 3.6 GPA in Psychology and a 3.3 GPA overall. Students must have earned at least an A in Psychology 301 and 302 (or equivalent transfer credits). The GRE is not an entrance requirement; however, students must have a letter of support from the faculty research mentor(s). Individual faculty may not admit more than two students per year (for a maximum total of 4 BA/MA students in their lab), unless a letter of justification and approval from the MPC is provided.

Course of Study

Students are required to take 8 credits of Methodology courses prior to admittance into the program. Thirty additional credits in graduate coursework are necessary to earn an MA degree. Students should consult with their faculty supervisor to select specific courses.

Credits include:

- 3 credits in each of four core sub-disciplines in psychology: 1) cognition; 2) neuroscience; 3) developmental; 4) social.
- A further 3 credits in their primary sub discipline of choice.
- At least 3 credit hours of research with their faculty research mentors for every semester enrolled in the program (for a minimum of 12 research credit hours total).
- Students must be a full time student, enrolled in at least 9 credit hours per semester of combined research and coursework. Students in their fourth year may count courses outside the graduate requirements towards their totals to be enrolled as a full time student.
- Students must receive at least a "B" in all graduate courses.

BA/Master's

Enrollment in the Master's component of the BA/Master's program is expected to be as a full-time student. The BA requirement in Psychology includes 12 elective credits. Students enrolled in the BA/MA program can use 12 graduate course credits in place of this requirement.

Timeline

Students take *up to* 18* graduate credits in their senior year and 18* credits of full-time study in their MA year. *These totals include at least 6 credits of laboratory research each year.

Students in the BA/MA program earn their BA degree when they have completed requirements for the BA. They then enroll in the graduate school for their final 2 semesters before graduating with an MA. Advisors should make note that students must be enrolled in enough *Graduate* level courses in their fourth year such that the required 12 graduate credits will count towards the UG concentration.

	Senior Year	MA Fall semester	MA Spring semester
	6-9 credits of research	3-6 credits research	3-6 credits research
	6-12 credits of courses	3-6 credits of courses	3-6 credits of courses
Totals	Must be full-time student	At least 9 credits/semester	At least 9 credits/semester

Master's Thesis

Students must propose and defend a Master's thesis. Upon admission to the program (during the fourth year of the 5 year BA/MA program), students begin work with their faculty research mentors. Students must select their final committee and propose their Master's thesis by the beginning of the third semester of their fifth year (e.g. before the start of Fall semester classes). Master's thesis projects must be defended by the end of the fifth, final year of the program.

The Master's thesis must be defended via approval of a written thesis evaluated by the student's primary advisor and a second thesis committee member who is a faculty member. Second committee members may include faculty outside of the department, school, or campus, so long as they are approved by the primary advisor. Upon approval of the written document, Masters students will present their thesis project orally to the department (approximately a 30-minute talk, with an additional 15 minutes for non-committee questions). Master's thesis procedures below for more details.

Application requirements:

The following items are required for BA/MA Program applications:

1. Letters of support/recommendation.
 - One letter of support from the faculty research mentor.
 - Two letters of recommendation. Applicant must identify the two letter writers by name and contact information. Letters from referees should be received by the deadline.
 - If the required letters are not received by the deadline the applicant will be notified. The MPC reserves the right to solicit these letters directly.
2. Academic transcripts from all previous institutions of higher education. Transcripts should include grades for the fall semester of the applicant's junior year.

3. Personal statement. Strong personal statements typically include information about previous research experience, a brief description of current research interests, and general plan for future career direction.

GRE scores are NOT required for acceptance into the program.

Applications are due shortly after the end of the fall semester in the applicant's junior year. Specific deadlines are posted by the MPC. Consideration will not be given to applicants who fail to provide all of the materials by the deadline.

The MPC will meet in January to decide which candidates will be admitted into the program. Students will be informed of their acceptance into the program at the beginning of the Spring term in their Junior year.

Note: BA/Master's Track students will **not** be provided any special consideration for admission to the PhD program.

Financial

Students are responsible for their tuition for all years of the BA/MA program. Individual faculty may be able to provide stipends or supplements. Students of minority groups may receive additional support during the BA component of the Program through the NIH-Minority Biomedical Research Support Program (but not the final MA component – NIH rules) on campus and other programs. Students are encouraged to apply for financial support from relevant funding sources to support additional education and research-related activities.

ADMISSION AND THESIS REQUIREMENTS¹

The Master's Thesis Common Process and Admission Requirements.

These common procedures and admission criteria are based on Rutgers University Standard Master's procedures from the Graduate college.

Note: The Psychology MA program DOES NOT lead to licensure as a clinician and does not meet the requirements to sit for a licensure exam.

The purpose of the Master's thesis is to help develop students' research and scholarship skills. These skills include concise, focused conceptualization and writing. Accordingly, with the thesis committee, the student will determine a potential target peer reviewed journal for the thesis, determine the potential length of an appropriate article (20-30 double spaced pages), and write up the thesis in the appropriate format. Additional material, which can include a more detailed introduction/conceptual/ literature review section, results tables, and discussion considerations, as well as specific instruments (such as the 3T TRIO), would be placed in Appendices.

1. Committee approval

Beginning with the incoming class of 2016-2017, a formal proposal for the thesis research must be presented to and approved by the student's committee. We require both a formal proposal

¹ Adapted from the Department of Psychology, Rutgers University School of Arts and Sciences in New Brunswick <http://psych.rutgers.edu/cl/201-master-of-science-degree-thesis-qualifying-examination>

meeting prior to the Master's thesis (occurring at the end of the first year in the program, and prior to the start of the 2nd year), the student's "senior" year), and a meeting to defend the thesis (occurring at the end of the 2nd year in the program). All members of the committee must approve both the proposal and the final defense. The main purpose of the proposal meeting is to provide clarity and common understanding among committee members and the student regarding the scope, focus, and journal audience for the thesis. When circumstances preclude a full committee meeting to approve the proposal, an alternative can be acceptable with the approval of the chair of the MPC.

2. IRB

All research that involves human subjects must be submitted to and approved by the Rutgers Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to the collection or analysis of any data. Even projects that use existing data must be submitted to the IRB for prior approval. Requirements, deadlines, and all forms are available at the website, <https://orra.rutgers.edu/irb>. All students must complete the relevant Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training before their research proposal will be approved by the IRB. Students are encouraged to take the online course during their first semester. Instructions to access the on-line course and exam can be found at the web site of the Office of Research and Regulatory Affairs (<https://orra.rutgers.edu/citi>).

3. Timing of the thesis:

- a. Students should begin planning for their thesis research during the first year of graduate study. The proposal must be completed by the fall term of the second year.
- b. Students are strongly encouraged to complete their thesis research during the second year of graduate study. In special circumstances, extensions can be granted with approval of the student's primary mentor and the MPC.

4. Procedures and Regulations governing the Master's Thesis

a. Application for Admission to Candidacy

Be sure that the original final transcript from the undergraduate school is on file in the Psychology Department, Newark, Main office, by the end of the first semester.

b. Master's Committee:

- i. The Committee normally consists of a Chairperson (the student's primary advisor) and one to two additional members. They must all be either members or associate members of the Graduate Faculty, according to the most current list of members maintained by the Psychology Department (which could be from other Departments). Students may nominate one additional member of the thesis committee who is not a member of the Graduate Faculty of Psychology. In this case, however, there must still be at least 2 members of the Graduate Faculty on the committee, bringing the total number of members to two or three. The student must submit a current curriculum vita of that person and a brief statement on the reason this person would be useful on the thesis Committee to their primary advisor and

the BAMA committee for approval. All outside Committee members must satisfy the criteria for associate membership on our Graduate Faculty. If fewer than two members of the committee are Psychology Department faculty, the committee chair must write a memo explaining why departmental faculty are not appropriate, and why selected committee members are appropriate and this must be approved by the Chair of the MPC.

ii. Complete the Master's Thesis Committee form. This form can be obtained from the Graduate Program in Psychology Department, Smith Hall, Newark Campus, and will be made available online through the department website (<http://psychology.rutgers.edu>). The completion of the form includes obtaining the concurrence and signature (to indicate that concurrence) of the chair of the MPC or equivalent committee. The Graduate Director (or Department Chair) will notify the graduate student of the approval of their Committee. The form is then filed in the Psychology Department office.

c. Final Examination for M.A. Degree

i. Prior to the defense, all members of the thesis committee must be given a written or electronic copy of the thesis for review and approval. Committee members must be given sufficient time to review the thesis (usually two weeks), and the student should anticipate feedback and recommendations for revisions from committee members at the defense. All Committee members must approve the thesis before the thesis is considered completed.

ii. The thesis defense affords the faculty an opportunity to focus on the student's in-depth understanding of the theories, mechanisms, methodology, research design, statistics, and/or research, theory, and practice implications of the research conducted. Thesis presentations should be limited to a 25-minute period given to research presentations at conferences, allowing more time for extended conversations about the student's understanding of what they have done and an assessment of their ability to articulate that understanding.

iii. Students must obtain an Application for Admission to Candidacy form and submit it to the Chairperson of the Committee. (Students must have completed at least 30 total course credits, of which 12 will be research credits required for the Master's Degree.)

iv. The Chairperson will record the results of the final examination on this form and sign it. The "final examination" is the final decision of the Master's Committee to accept or reject the thesis. Final acceptance or rejection of the thesis may be based solely on an evaluation of the written thesis, or an evaluation of both the written thesis and an oral defense of the thesis. It is then the student's responsibility to have it signed by the other members of the Committee.

- v. The Thesis title must also be completed and returned to the Psychology Department office for processing prior to obtaining the Graduate Director's signature. Completed forms must be filed with the Graduate School no later than three weeks before Commencement (no later than announced deadlines for October and January).
 - vi. Conflicts at any stage of the process may be submitted to and resolved by the MPC.
- d. Submission of the thesis to the Graduate School is done electronically.
- i. The thesis must be converted to a PDF file and then submitted online at <https://etd.libraries.rutgers.edu/login.php>.
 - ii. Additionally, submission of one hard copy of the Master's thesis is required by the Department.
 - iii. A booklet entitled "Style Guide for Thesis and Dissertation Preparation" may be obtained from the Graduate Program Director are required to submit an abstract not exceeding 350 words.
- e. A Diploma Application must be filled out. This online diploma application is available at <http://www.ugadmissions.rutgers.edu/Diploma/Apply.aspx>.

5. Deadline Dates

The exact deadline date changes by a day or so each semester, so students should check with the Psychology Department Administrator for exact dates.

Extensions and Dismissal from the program

Students are required to achieve at least a B in all graduate courses while in the program. If students receive a grade lower than a B, the MPC and the student's advisor will meet to assess whether the student will be dismissed from the program.

In extenuating circumstances, students may take more than the allotted 5-years to complete the BA/MA program, pending approval of the students primary research faculty mentor and the MPC. A six-month extension will be granted if the rationale stated on the written request is acceptable. No meeting is required with the student. This six-month extension will be the only one given. If the Master's thesis is not completed at the end of this period, the student will be recommended for termination from the program.

At the time of the thesis proposal (between the first and second year in the program), faculty must review the progress of the student and approve the continued participation of the candidate in the lab. Faculty reserve the right to ask a candidate to leave their lab. If this occurs, the candidate may be admitted into another lab within the psychology department, to continue through the program. If the candidate is unable to find a faculty member that is willing to take on the responsibilities of primary research mentor, then the student will be dismissed from the program.

If dismissed, the student's current credit standing will be assessed. If the students have completed sufficient credits to graduate with a BA/BS, they will graduate with this degree if they so choose. If the student has not met the criteria for graduating with the BA/BS, the student may continue to take courses at Rutgers, enrolled at undergraduate student status.