University of Southern California

Clinical Science Handbook

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Doctoral Program in Clinical Science
Department of Psychology
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, CA 90089-1061
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I. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to describe the philosophy and structure of the Clinical Science Program at the University of Southern California. In addition to this Handbook, the Psychology Department Handbook for Graduate Students contains all information regarding departmental and clinical area course requirements and research requirements to earn the Ph.D. in the Department of Psychology. That book should be read carefully upon entering the program and used as a reference when planning your course registration.

The material provided here supplements the departmental handbook with information about clinical requirements, integration of research, coursework and clinical work, clinical program milestones, and recommended steps to completion of the program in an effective and timely fashion. In case of any unintended contradictions, the Psychology Department Handbook should be followed.

A student’s requirements are based on the Departmental and Clinical Science Handbooks for that student’s year of entry. However, if requirements change during a student’s tenure in the program, that student can elect, with the faculty advisor’s approval, to follow the requirements of a later year. It is recommended that students keep of copy of the handbook from year of admission to refer to as they progress through the program.

This handbook has been written so that all students are alerted to important issues and have the same basic information. It is the student’s responsibility to become familiar with the policies contained in each document.

A handbook cannot supplant the importance of direct communication, however. Nor can it offer all the answers to specific, individualized questions. Students are urged to explore these topics as needed with faculty advisors, the Director of Clinical Training, or the Associate Director of Clinical Training.

In addition to the information below, the clinical science program sends students and faculty a weekly newsletter, which provides up-to-date announcements about program and national meetings, upcoming professional opportunities, funding opportunities, as well as personal announcements and achievements. These newsletters are archived during the semester on the clinical science website. However, the newsletters contain time-sensitive information and it is important to read them on a weekly basis.

Other important resources include:

** the Psychology Department Handbook for Graduate Students (updated each year and sometimes called the “Blue Book”)
** the Graduate Assistant Handbook
  (http://www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/documents/StuServices/GA_Handbook.pdf)
** The USC 2009-2010 Catalogue Graduate and Professional Education
  (http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/cat2009/private/pdf/2009_10/Grad_and_Prof_09.pdf)
** The USC 2009-2010 Catalogue—The Graduate School
** The Psychological Services Center Manual
** SCAMPUS—A Guidebook for USC Students (http://web-app.usc.edu/scampus/)
**The USC Listing of Policies (http://policies.usc.edu/index_policies.html)

I.a. Special Requests and Exceptions

If a student wishes to have an exception made to what is contained in this Clinical Area, the request needs to be addressed in a formal petition to the clinical faculty. Such requests are submitted to the DCT for discussion in a clinical faculty meeting. The petition should be discussed with, and approved by, the research advisor prior to submitting it. Exceptions to departmental requirements or procedures must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.
II. Mission of the Clinical Science Program

The USC Clinical Science Program jointly follows the scientist-practitioner model of training as well as the clinical-science model. According to the 1990 Gainesville Conference Report, “The scientist-practitioner model...is an integrative approach to science and practice wherein each must continually inform the other...Scientist-practitioner psychologists embody a research orientation in their practice and a practice relevance in their research...The graduate of the training model is capable of functioning as an investigator and as a practitioner, and may function as either or both.” At USC, we provide training in the science and practice of clinical psychology, each complementing the other, with an emphasis on research.

The clinical science model of training emerged more recently, promulgated by the Academy of Psychological Clinical Science. Our program is a founding member of that body, whose mission is “to advance...a psychological science directed at the promotion of adaptive functioning; at the assessment, understanding, amelioration, and prevention of human problems in behavior, affect, cognition or health; and the application of knowledge in ways consistent with scientific evidence. The Academy's emphasis on the term ‘science' underscores its commitment to empirical approaches to evaluating the validity and utility of testable hypotheses and to advancing knowledge by this method.”

By providing an education based on the integration of science and practice we endeavor to prepare our graduates to contribute to the understanding of psychological functioning and the prevention of psychological problems. We anticipate that our graduates will be active consumers of psychological knowledge but also to go further – to be on the forefront of advancing the field. We have a wide vision of what types of advances our graduates might make. Some graduates might advance knowledge through traditional scientific means, such as journal publications, whereas others might advance knowledge by evaluating and shaping organizations and systems that provide psychological services, by developing intervention programs, by training others who provide psychological services, or by educating the public in ways that promote societal and individual well-being.

At the cornerstone of this educational model, and spanning all training components of the model, is an emphasis on critical thinking. In light of the breadth of information and rapid changes in the field of clinical psychology, graduates must be able to sift through new information, incorporating what they deem worthwhile into their work. The critical thinking skills they develop serve as the tools to evaluate, integrate, and generate new information.

Our curriculum at USC entails a set core of didactic courses on the theory, research, and applications of clinical psychology. There are also experiential requirements involving mentored research experiences and supervised clinical experiences. In addition to the required core curriculum, the program allows students to develop specific interests and specialty areas. The most formalized specialty areas are clinical-aging and child and family psychology, which bring a life-span development perspective to the program as a whole. A formalized agreement also allows students simultaneously to pursue a Master's in Public Health alongside their Ph.D. in psychology. Other, less formalized areas of specialization include health psychology, psychopathology, addictions, cultural competence in clinical psychology, and family violence.

Three themes run through the required and specialized training.

- As stated above, a strong empirical emphasis integrated with clinical concerns.
- A concern with diverse and often underserved populations, such as ethnic and cultural minorities, older adults, children and adolescents, chemically dependent persons, traumatized individuals, persons with physical illnesses, and gays and lesbians.
- An appreciation for multiple interacting influences, including social, behavioral, developmental cognitive, biological and genetic.
III. Overview

Students in our program should plan to spend 5 years full-time on campus as well as an additional year in a full time clinical internship.

Students who are up-to-date with research requirements and want to extend their research experiences and expertise may elect to spend more than five years on campus if (a) the additional time is advantageous to their educational program and career planning; and (b) they have arranged for additional funding.

Students need to be aware that financial support packages offered with admission typically cover five years, and those packages are conditional upon successful progress through the program. Thus, the student who elects to spend more than five years on campus should assume that the department is unlikely to have funding and should look for alternative sources of support (For more information, see Financial Aid section below).

In general, decisions about spending more than 5 years on campus or less than 5 years on campus should be made in consultation with the research advisor.

Students are simultaneously involved in three types of learning experiences—classroom learning, research training, and training in clinical assessment and intervention. In addition, all students obtain experience teaching, either through a paid TA position or through other means, e.g., volunteering to be a TA or obtaining independent teaching experience through summer teaching opportunities or the departments’ Preparing Future Faculty program.

IV. Curricular Requirements and Substantive Topics that are Required

The Psychology Department Handbook for Graduate Students contains all information regarding departmental and clinical area course requirements, research requirements, and applied clinical requirements. That book should be read carefully upon entering the program and used as a reference when planning your course registration. A student’s requirements are based on the Handbook for that student’s year of entry, although the student can elect, with the faculty advisor’s approval to use the requirements of a later year.

The department’s graduate program has a set of core requirements that apply to all areas of the department. Each area may add to those requirements. The course and substantive requirements of the Clinical Science Program thus encompass departmental requirements and requirements specific to the program. The following table presents departmental and clinical science requirements and ways of fulfilling those requirements. Students will be required to show their progress toward completion of these requirements and, upon completion, to submit a Curricular requirements form with completion dates with their annual activities report to the research advisor and the Associate DCT. A worksheet for this report is attached at the end of the handbook.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>General way of fulfilling</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Techniques of Data Analysis</td>
<td>Overview of Quantitative Methods in Psychology (PSYC 500); Statistics in Psychological Research (PSYC 501); Analysis of Variance and Experimental Design (PSYC 502); Regression and the General Linear Model (PSYC 503); Research Design in Developmental Psychology (PSYC 524); Multivariate Analysis of Behavioral Data (PSYC 575); Analysis of Covariance Structures (PSYC 577); Seminar in Quantitative Psychology (PSYC 621); Data Analysis (PM 511A)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biological Aspects of Behavior (1 course required)</td>
<td>Psychophysiology (PSYC 544)</td>
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<td>Cognitive Neuroscience PSYC 540</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cognitive &amp; Affective Aspects of Behavior (1 course required)</td>
<td>Learning and Cognition (PSYC 506)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Aspects of Behavior (1 course required)</td>
<td>Seminar in Social Psychology (PSYC 512); Advanced Seminar in Social Psychology (PSYC 612)</td>
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<tr>
<td>History and Systems of Psychology (1 course required)</td>
<td>Historical Foundations of Psychology (PSYC 508); History and Philosophy of Psychology (PSYC 599)</td>
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<td>Psychological Measurement (1 course required)</td>
<td>Psychological Assessment (PSYC 515)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Methodology (1 course and mentoring in lab)</td>
<td>Research Design (PSYC 504)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Differences in Behavior (2 courses required)</td>
<td>Psychological Assessment (PSYC 515); Psychopathology (PSYC 514)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Development (2 semesters required)</td>
<td>Advanced Clinical Practicum in Older Adults or Child/Family (PSYC 695)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dysfunctional Behavior or Psychopathology (1 course required)</td>
<td>Psychopathology (PSYC 514)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Standards and Ethics</td>
<td>Infusion and Brown bag and CE series</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theories and Methods of Assessment and Diagnosis (2 courses requires)</td>
<td>Psychological Assessment (PSYC 515); Psychopathology (PSYC 514)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Intervention (619 and 4 semesters of 695 required)</td>
<td>Psychological Intervention (PSYC 619); Advanced Clinical Practicum (PSYC 695)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation &amp; Supervision</td>
<td>Peer supervision in di-pracs; brown bag series; mentoring in lab; community consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating the Efficacy of Interventions (619 and 4 semesters of 695 required)</td>
<td>Psychological Intervention (PSYC 619); Advanced Clinical Practicum (PSYC 695)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and Individual Diversity</td>
<td>Infusion; Brown bags; Seminar in Cultural Diversity (PSYC 660)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes essential for life-long learning, scholarly inquiry, etc.</td>
<td>Infusion/completion of quals and other research requirements; mentoring in lab; departmental colloquia, job talks</td>
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### IV.a. Additional Curricular and Training Requirements

Several special curricular topics are met through “infusion”, which means that they are included in courses comprising the required clinical science sequence as well as through the “brown bag” clinical science professional development noon meetings and the day-long “clinical science invited lecture series”. Each year, there will be at least one ‘brown bag’ professional development meeting or a day-long invited presentation on: (a) professional standards and ethics, (b) consultation and supervision, and (c) cultural and individual diversity.

Attendance is required at the brown bags and invited lectures on these special topics, and students will be asked to help us keep track of their participation at these events. If students have scheduling conflicts, e.g., TA responsibilities, they should discuss priorities with the research advisor or DCT.

### V. Research Experience and Requirements

It is assumed that students will be actively involved in research throughout their training. Our overriding goal is that students become competent at conceptualizing, designing, conducting, and writing scholarly articles. Toward this goal, the master’s and dissertation projects can be written up in ‘publication-ready’ format. A related goal is that students become competent at writing scholarly review papers. Toward this goal, the requirement for the qualifying exam written paper is to demonstrate the ability to review critically a body of literature and to discuss that literature in an original and integrative fashion in a review paper.

The program is designed to foster knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with meeting the rigorous demands of a productive, scientific career. We endeavor to provide a context in which all students can publish works of a sufficient quality and volume to set them on the pathway of becoming competitive for jobs in academic clinical psychology as well as in other wide-ranging clinical psychology positions that require evidence of competence in scholarship. The following steps and deadlines are provided to assist students...
develop the necessary skill set for conducting independent research and simultaneously for meeting the research requirements of the Ph.D.

What follow are the minimal research requirements to complete the Ph.D. degree. We encourage students not to limit their research to the specific requirements. We also encourage students to recognize that not all research will go as planned. As is the case even for the most advanced researchers, not all research projects result in publishable products. In general, it is good to partake in additional research opportunities that might be available rather than focus exclusively on the master’s and dissertation projects. Exceeding the specified requirements is necessary to get a full and rich experience as a researcher as well as to initiate a pathway that opens doors to academic and/or research career tracks.

The timeline indicates deadlines but students are not prohibited from meeting milestones ahead of schedule.

V.a. Clinical Psychology Program Research Milestones Timeline

<table>
<thead>
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<th>By the end of . . . .</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1st year, 1st semester</strong></td>
<td>Develop ideas for first year proposal, e.g., specific aims and hypotheses, and know what data will be used or collected</td>
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</table>
| **1st year, 2nd semester** | **April 15:** Submit research proposal  
**April 30:** Defend first year proposal with 3-person committee |
| **2nd year, 1st semester** | Do data collection, analyses for second year project |
| **2nd year, 2nd semester** | **May 15:** Submit second year project or a summary of progress  
**May 31:** Meet with 3-person committee to defend 2nd year project or to identify the steps needed for the 2nd year project to be complete |
| **3rd year, 1st semester** | **October 1:** Final deadline for committee approval of master’s project; Work on publication and conference presentation/s; departmental poster display of 2nd year projects in December |
| **3rd year, 2nd semester** | Form the guidance committee early in this semester.  
**May 10:** Submit 2-page prospectus of the dissertation proposal that focuses primarily on research aims and briefly outlines methods. Submit 1-page concept paper describing quals topic and what literatures are to be covered.  
**May 31:** meet with those committee members to discuss progress toward quals completion |
| **4th year, 1st semester** | Work on quals—By the first day of the 8th semester, hand in either the quals review paper or the dissertation proposal. By January 31, schedule an advisory meeting on the dissertation proposal, a final meeting on the dissertation proposal, or a final meeting on the quals paper. |
| **4th year, 2nd semester** | **May 15:** deadline for second part of quals to be submitted; oral exam scheduled for later that month and passed by May 31 |
| **5th year, 1st semester** | Dissertation research |
| **5th year, 2nd semester** | Dissertation research |
| **6th year, 1st semester** | Internship |
| **6th year, 2nd semester** | Internship |

Papers need to be submitted to the committee two weeks before a scheduled meeting.

For clinical science students, each academic year culminates with a committee meeting to review research projects, keep students on track, and set goals for the upcoming year.

- Year 1 = presentation of 1st year proposal;
- Year 2 = 2nd year project defense or discussion of progress on that project;
- Year 3 = discussion of dissertation proposal prospectus and possible topic/s for quals paper;
- Year 4 = qualifying exam meeting;
Year 5 or later = dissertation defense.

V.b. First Year Project Proposal
The first year is spent developing a research question and writing a proposal for the second year project. In most cases, that project also will become the student’s master’s project. The purpose of this proposal is to develop the skill sets involved in generating a testable idea and writing up the proposal in a format that is used for grant proposal submission. Thus, to learn these skills, the proposal is to be written in close collaboration with your research advisor. By April 30th, the student meets with a 3-person committee (research advisor, another member of the clinical science area, and a member of the psychology department faculty outside the clinical area) to defend that proposal. It generally is a good idea to discuss the composition of your committee with your advisor.

V.c. Second Year Project (typically is submitted as Master’s Research Project)
As soon as the 3-person committee approves the first year proposal, the student can conduct the project. The summer following the first year is a good time to devote to that project. Typically, the second year is spent conducting, analyzing, and writing the second year project. A written version of the completed project is to be submitted to the 3-person committee by May 15th and defended by May 31st. If the project is not ready to be written up, a summary of progress should be submitted to the committee by May 15th and the committee meeting, scheduled by May 31st, should be used to summarize progress on the project and map out steps toward completion of the project by the departmental deadline of Sept 15th of the third year. Depending upon how close to completion the project is, the committee can decide whether or not to hold another meeting.

V.d. Qualifying Exam
The qualifying examination involves two written components and an oral exam on each component. The written components are: (a) a comprehensive review paper on a topic of the student’s choosing; (b) the dissertation proposal, which is to be written in the form of a NRSA proposal.

At least one of the two written components is to be turned into the committee by the end of the 7th semester (it technically is due the first day of the 8th semester). The second component is due by the end of the 8th semester. The student can choose which component to complete first. Alternatively, the student can hand in both written components together, if both are completed by the end of the 7th semester.

All components of the qualifying exam are presented to the 5-person guidance committee, comprised of: the research advisor, 1-2 other clinical science faculty members, 1-2 other psychology faculty members and one tenured or tenure-track faculty member from another USC Ph.D.-granting department, i.e., the “outside member.” Minimally, there should be two clinical science faculty members. Graduate school rules determine who can or cannot serve as an outside member and students are advised to make sure that the desired committee fits all criteria. All five members must be present at any meeting in which there is voting. The chair and outside member must be physically present in the room whereas other members can join by teleconference in unusual circumstances and when acceptable to the committee chair.

Qualifying Exam Review Paper. Feedback is limited to the one-page concept paper presented to research advisor and committee members and (if the student wishes) her/his research lab. Feedback is limited to the scope of the paper and literature review. There is to be no feedback on the specific contents of the paper or written drafts: no faculty member provides feedback to the student in advance of the meeting (no editing, reading of drafts, no written feedback from the advisor, nor any direct input).

As with any good review, this paper should aim to provide a critical review, not just summarize the literature. It helps to have a specific question in mind so that the paper can be organized around answering that question, e.g., to what extent do we have empirical support for a specific method of assessment or a specific intervention? What variables moderate the relationship between X and Y, and why is this important? The paper also should clarify what is known about the topic and what still remains to be known and thereby point to future directions and/or clinical implications if appropriate. The key (and the challenge) to a good review paper is to provide a focused synthesis and interpretation of findings and thus present a relevant take-home message
that highlights what is the significance and implications of these findings. Many journals publish review papers and it can be useful to have a journal outlet in mind when writing the paper. Some journals to look at include: Alzheimer Disease and Associated Disorders, Clinical Psychology Review, Applied and Preventive Psychology, Current Directions in Psychological Science, Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, and Psychological Bulletin. The clinical area maintains a library of qualifying examination review papers, some published and some unpublished, as a guide for writing such papers.

Writing a quals review paper is probably the equivalent to taking 2-3 intensive courses. It will be necessary to set aside time in your schedule to complete the qualifying exam paper, e.g., cut back to 1-2 courses for an entire academic year or cut back to no courses for one semester. When you are taking quals, you are encouraged to enroll in GRSC 800 if you are not taking other courses.

**Evaluation of the quals review paper.** The student should schedule a one-hour oral exam on the quals review paper to occur approximately two weeks after the written product is handed into the guidance committee. At the beginning of the meeting, the committee will discuss their impressions of the quals paper without the student present. The committee will then question the student on the paper. At the end of oral portion of the quals review paper meeting, the student will be asked to leave the room while the committee takes a formal pass/fail vote for this part of the qualifying exam. The pass or fail outcome will be recorded and placed in the student's file. A pass means that the student has completed this portion of the qualifying exam. A fail means that the student needs to retake this portion. The committee can give general recommendations of how to improve the qualifying exam but should not give point-by-point feedback of specific changes to be made. As per Graduate School rules, the student cannot retake this portion of the qualifying exam for 6 months.

**Dissertation Proposal:** The dissertation proposal is to be written in the style of a NRSA individual pre-doctoral grant format following the general guidelines for the research plan [see description of NRSA at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/index.htm]. No training plan is needed. Although the proposal is in the general format of a NRSA proposal, it does not need to adhere precisely to the same page limitations. Moreover, if you wish to use the format for another type of proposal, please discuss that with your advisor. The key is including the basic components of a research proposal: specific aims, background, methods, analyses, time line and references.

Whereas the first year proposal is written in close collaboration with the research advisor, the dissertation proposal, as part of your qualifying exam, is to be written with more independence. It is understood, however, that the conceptualization and design of this research will be discussed with your advisor and others in your research lab. The advisor may read and comment on drafts.

An option to students is to schedule an “advisory” meeting on the dissertation proposal. Rather than consulting separately with committee members (or perhaps in addition to consulting separately with committee members or others), the student can use this meeting to get preliminary feedback on the proposal with all committee members present. It is particularly useful if the student wishes to get started collecting dissertation data and working on the dissertation, and/or if the student is submitting the proposal to be evaluated for outside funding. More generally, committee members typically have good ideas for improving dissertation proposals and often recommend useful but substantial changes. By scheduling an advisory meeting, the student can incorporate these changes into the final dissertation proposal, which can lead to a substantially improved proposal and a better dissertation overall.

The advisory meeting will not lead to pass/fail vote. However, the committee will determine (without the student present) whether they; (a) approve the dissertation proposal so that they student can move ahead but with a specified set of changes that the student will report back on; (b) require a revised proposal with a specified set of revisions; (c) approve the dissertation idea in concept but require a new proposal; or (d) require an entirely new proposal. The committee members will also decide what information they will want at the formal dissertation proposal oral defense. This information will be recorded, signed by the advisor and student,
and placed in the student’s file. It is the responsibility of the faculty committee to be very clear with the student what further work and future steps they anticipate before discussing the proposal again.

**Order of the components of the quals exam:**

By the first day of the 8th semester, the student must:
- Hand in the review paper and schedule a 1-hour oral defense OR
- Hand in the dissertation proposal and schedule a 1-hour advisory meeting or a 1-hour oral defense OR
- Hand in both the review paper and the dissertation proposal and schedule a 2-hour oral defense.

By the end of the 8th semester, the student must:
- Hand in the remaining qualifying exam component/s and schedule a 1-2 hour oral defense.

**One pass/fail vote is taken for the qualifying review paper and accompanying oral defense. A separate pass/fail vote is taken on the dissertation proposal and oral defense. All votes (passes as well as fails) are recorded, dated, and placed in the student’s file. After both of the two components of the qualifying exam has been “passed,” the qualifying exam can be recorded as “passed” on the Graduate School forms.** Thus, to “pass” quals, both written products and the associated oral defenses must be acceptable to the committee with the date of passing being the date of the second oral.

A student is allowed one retake of the qualifying review paper if that is failed the first time. There must be 6-month interval between the two oral exams on the qualifying review paper and the interval may not be longer than 12 months.

A student is allowed one advisory meeting on the dissertation proposal. Following that, if the student fails the dissertation proposal, she/he is allowed one retake of the dissertation proposal oral. The **Dissertation Proposal Approval Form** is to be used after the formal oral on the dissertation proposal to list changes that are to be made before commencement of work on the proposed dissertation. It is the student’s responsibility to provide the committee members with a cover letter stating exactly what changes have been made and how the recommendations have been addressed. Committee members need to sign off on the revised proposal and the recommended changes before work on the dissertation begins.

The summer often is a productive time to write the quals so students are encouraged to start this process during the summer following their 3rd year. The entire qualifying exam and orals are to be completed before May 31st of the student’s 8th semester. In light of the 6-month interval rule, if parts of the quals are left to that date, a failure at that point would mean postponing applying for internship for one year. Aiming for a February qualifying exam oral defense would alleviate that problem.

**V.e. Dissertation**

Once the dissertation proposal has been approved, the student can start to work on that project. It is strongly recommended that the student have the dissertation proposal approved before conducting the research although it often makes sense to collect some pilot data to guide decision-making in the proposal.

It is strongly recommended that the student collect dissertation data and make as much progress as possible on the dissertation before leaving for internship. Ideally, the student actually defends the completed dissertation before leaving for internship, or at least is well into analyzing and writing up the dissertation. Students generally find it difficult to make significant progress on the dissertation during the internship year. It is worth noting that many job opportunities and post-doctoral fellowships are contingent upon having completely defended and submitted the dissertation.

The dissertation may be written up as one large, multi-faceted study or 2-3 related but separate manuscripts *if the committee approves this later approach*. One piece, for example, could be a theoretical or measurement study.
The dissertation defense is a 2-hour meeting with all 5 members of the committee or a reduced committee of 4 members. Representation at the dissertation defense must include: Dissertation chair, member from outside the department, member from outside the clinical science area, and either 1 or 2 clinical science faculty members. It is typically recommended to have two members of the clinical science area, regardless of the affiliation of the dissertation chair. The dissertation defense is an “open” meeting and a notice will be posted in the Psychology Department. The first hour is a formal presentation of your dissertation including time to field questions from guests. In the second hour, only the dissertation committee is present for questions and discussion.

It is a good idea to attempt to schedule committee meetings with considerable lead-time as it often is difficult to find an agreeable time for everyone to meet. Getting schedules from committee members at least one month in advance is advised. Summers are a particularly difficult time to schedule a meeting as faculty may not be on campus. In addition, it is important to determine far in advance of scheduling if a committee member is unavailable due to a sabbatical etc. In such cases, it is the student’s responsibility (a) to identify a willing substitute whose participation is agreeable to your advisor and who is eligible (according to university guidelines) serve as a substitute member and (b) to make sure the appropriate paperwork is completed in advance of the meeting. There are university rules specifying that the chair and outside member must be physically present although tele- or video-participation is possible for other committee members.

On the other hand, before deciding upon a specific date, it recommended that the project is far enough along to defend on the scheduled date. It is not advisable, for example, to schedule a master’s or dissertation defense prior to having analyses completed or nearly completed. The anticipated timeline for distributing the proposal should include time for 1-3 complete readings by the research advisor with revisions in between. Advisors can help make realistic estimates about a timetable to schedule a defense date.

V.f. Clinical Science Funding for Research

The Clinical Science Graduate Research Fund provides funding (up to $1000 for each student) to help defray the costs of conducting and presenting research. The funding can be requested all at once or in several smaller requests adding up to no more than $1000. Original receipts are needed to document expenses in order to be reimbursed.

These funds can be applied to: purchasing software, photocopying, translating instruments, subject reimbursements, paying undergraduate research assistants, and similar costs involved in conducting research.

Funds also can be used for travel expenses to present research at national conferences. Reimbursable expenses include plane fare, hotel, food, conference registration and car rental. Amounts cannot exceed university per diem. For travel funds, students also can apply to the Graduate School.

Calls for proposals for research funding are reviewed once each semester; the submission date for such requests will be announced through the clinical area newsletter.

VI. Teaching Experiences and Requirements

Students are to get teaching experience. Generally this will take the form of being a Teaching Assistant, which can provide experience teaching small sections, lecturing to a large class, developing teaching materials, observing master professors, planning for the complexities of grading, and dealing with student issues. A student who does not have paid a TA position can choose to be a volunteer TA or obtain some other teaching experience (e.g., through a summer program or through the undergraduate Writing Program).

Opportunities sometimes arise for more independent teaching, e.g., the Writing Program, summer school classes at USC or elsewhere, or part-time teaching positions at local universities and colleges for advanced students. Students who are interested in such positions should discuss possible options with the research advisor, DCT and department chair.
Teaching assistants are evaluated by students as well as by the faculty mentor at the end of each semester. Responsible and professional performance is required to continue to receive TA positions. These evaluations are part of the written documents considered in the annual review of students.

VII. Clinical Experiences and Requirements

Students are to develop and hone their clinical skills in a step-wise fashion throughout their training. The required clinical sequence of coursework spans three years on-campus. The typical sequence is as follows but may vary based on course availability. Interviewing (PSYC 595a) and Assessment (PSYC 515) during Year 1, fall semester; Assessment Practicum (PSYC 595b) and Intervention (PSYC 612) during Year 1, spring semester; Psychopathology during Year 2 (PSYC 514); at least 2 full academic years of Didactic-Practicum (PSYC 695 during Years 2-3). Students are to enroll in PSYC 695 during the summer if they are doing any assessment or intervention during that time. Most students continue their clinical training during their fourth and fifth years on-campus to obtain additional skills and/or to work with specific populations. This could include taking an additional year of Didactic-Practicum if that fits with the student’s training objectives. A year-long APA approved internship is required prior to earning the Ph.D.

The program’s model of clinical work is empirically based. We do not subscribe to one theoretical orientation but we do subscribe to careful review of our clinical work with operationally defined outcomes and regular monitoring and evaluation of those outcomes. Di-prac classes will specify evaluation methods appropriate for the problems addressed. Systems for monitoring client progress continually evolve as students and supervisors design and develop measurements to be sensitive to the needs of specific clients.

As part of students’ first three years of required practicum work (PSYC 595 and 695), students are to keep a clinical portfolio. This portfolio contains the following (all in format that removes any identifying information about the client):

(a) A clinical intake report on a non-clinical volunteer (Year 1, fall)
(b) Two completed assessment reports (including results of testing from the practicum placement (Year 1, spring)
(c) A case summary report, including process and outcome data, on one case seen during each year plus a 1-2 page “Theory of Change” paper that reflects the student’s personalized, integrated, theoretical perspective of what brings about clinical change (Years 2 and 3, spring). These products will be read by the Di-Prac instructor and will be part of the annual student review.

VII.a. Preliminary Competencies

As part of students’ introductory practicum classes, each student will receive and should read the following documents on ethical and legal responsibilities in clinical work: APA Ethical Principles of Psychology and Code of Conduct, the California Child Abuse Reporting Law, the California Elder Abuse Reporting Law, involuntary commitment procedures, and the California Department of Consumer Affairs brochure “Professional Therapy Never Includes Sex.” Students will be asked to document that they have received and read the materials.

The entire California Laws and Regulations for the Practice of Psychology can be found at http://www.psychboard.ca.gov/lawsregs/index.shtml. Clicking on “2009 Laws and Regulations Booklet” downloads all the relevant statutes.

In addition, you also should enroll in the USC sponsored HIPAA Educational Program found on the IRB website, http://ooc.usc.edu/PrivacySecurity/HippaPrivacy/EduProgram.cfm

VII.b. Supervision

Under NO circumstance are students permitted to treat clients or engage in psychology-related, quasi-psychological or quasi-therapeutic activities on or off campus without supervision.
Students must have clinical supervisors for all clinical work they do. Students should seek clarification from the DCT or Associate DCT whenever there are questions about whether paid or volunteer activities on or off campus might be construed as clinical work.

In general, cases seen in the Didactic-Practicum are supervised by the instructors of those courses or with the approval of di-prac instructors when other supervisors do supervision on di-prac cases.

The Executive Director of the PSC (sometimes with the consultation di-prac instructors or the Director of Tingstad Older Adult Counseling Center) will make supervisor assignments when a student is seeing clients through the PSC. At the time a case is assigned to a therapist, the case also must be assigned to an approved supervisor. If a supervisor cannot take on another case, the student must immediately report back to the PSC Executive Director to request another supervisor. Students may not make arrangements by themselves for supervision. However, we encourage students to discuss their training needs and to identify appropriate supervisors in collaboration with the Director of the PSC and the di-prac instructor. At any time, a student may have more than one supervisor; however, it is recommended that students limit their total number of supervisors.

There often are questions about how long to work with a supervisor and how many cases to take to any one supervisor. These are good questions to review with the Executive Director of the PSC, DCT, Associate DCT and faculty advisor. It is important that at least two supervisors can comment in detail on a student’s clinical work prior to internship.

Di-prac instructors will provide at least two hours of group supervision per week as part of the scheduled di-prac. In addition, the instructor will have an individual supervision session with each student at least twice per semester. Students may also be assigned to a supervisor outside the di-prac instructor, as described above. We expect that each student will meet with his or her supervisor (either individually or in a small group) for at least one hour each week that clients are seen. All psychotherapy supervision, by di-prac instructors or outside supervisors, will include viewing and/or listening to video or audio recordings, or directly participating with the student (e.g., co-leading a group) on a regular basis. We also expect supervisors to review case notes.

Each supervisor will provide feedback on a supervisee at least once per year. These supervisor evaluations are part of the written documents considered in the annual activities review of students.

In addition, students provide evaluation forms to the DCT regarding supervisors at least once per year. The DCT will review these forms and address any problems that may arise.

VII.c. Externships

Externships (work other than that in the Psychology Services Center) may be acceptable depending upon the student's progress in coursework and research, as well as the student's other sources of funding. Additional clinical experience often is encouraged during the 4th and 5th years. Students may: (a) secure paid or unpaid positions to do research or clinical work at facilities other than the PSC; and/or (b) provide professional services in an independent practice under the supervision of a qualified clinical psychologist.

However, students:
(a) must seek the approval of their faculty advisor prior to engaging in any professional activities on or off campus;
(b) generally cannot work in a paid position >50% time and, if they do work >50% time, need permission from the Graduate School. Thus, a student who already is employed through a TA, RA or has a fellowship could not accept another paid position.

Because of the Graduate School 50% “rule,” summer is an excellent time to do a paid externship. Many forms of university funding apply only to the 9-month academic year. Unpaid externships over the summer also are a
good time for students to get specialized experience without interfering with responsibilities during the academic year.

Research or clinical externships could be highly beneficial to a student’s educational or career objectives. However, decisions about such position must be made in consultation with the research and academic advisor. The advisor’s input often is useful in determining what areas of the student’s skill might best be strengthened and where to seek externships that complement the student’s other work.

There is a form that must be completed and signed by the DCT prior to commencement of any non-course-related psychological work. Any student intending to work in a private practice setting (such as by becoming a registered psychological assistant) must submit the CV of the intended supervisor to the clinical psychology faculty for review and possible approval. Not all private practitioners provide adequate supervisory oversight or embody scientific and ethical ideals of practice. Functioning as an assistant to such a practitioner is not beneficial to the student’s learning or to the student’s career. Faculty review of potential supervisors is partly to protect the public and partly to protect the student.

For any practicum/externship work that is done as part of a class (e.g., the assessment practicum), the intended primary supervisor should become part of our supervisor pool. The Associate DCT and/or instructor of the class provide placement options, and will be in contact with the supervisors at those sites. It is very helpful that students also provide feedback about how the placement is going and report back on both strengths and problems with a placement. When students are concerned about the quality of training at a placement, it is important to speak as soon as possible to the course instructor who set up the placement as well as to the Associate DCT or DCT. Likewise, it is important to be aware that students’ work in the community reflects not only upon them but also upon our program.

If an externship position is obtained, it is the student’s responsibility to provide the Associate DCT with the name and address of the facility, and the name, address, and phone number of the supervisor so that that supervisor can be contacted for periodic evaluations of the student.

The terms of any externship placement – whether required or elective – are negotiated agreements of three parties: the student, the clinical program, and the placement site. As such, students may not unilaterally terminate any placement agreement. Should the student feel a need to end a placement before the agreed end date, the student must first consult with the Director of Clinical Training or the Associate Director of Clinical Training and seek written consent to resign the placement.

Furthermore, a placement, while generally not paid, must be regarded in many respects as employment. Students who are committed to be on a placement may not schedule travel or vacations that might disrupt their placement schedule without first seeking approval from their placement supervisor as well as their di-prac and other on-campus practicum supervisors, if applicable.

Even if students obtain paid, outside clinical work, they must seek approval of the arrangement, including the supervisory arrangement, from the DCT’s office, and appropriate documents must be placed in the student’s file, prior to commencing outside clinical work, to verify that appropriate permissions were obtained.

In order to be granted permission to do external clinical placements that exceed the requirements of the program, students must generally be in good standing and progressing in a timely fashion toward academic requirements. In addition, the faculty will consider issues raised in the annual student review indicating that such a placement is inadvisable.

VII.d. Year-long Internship

A full-time pre-doctoral APA-approved clinical internship is required as part of the training for the Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology. Students generally apply for the internship during the fourth or fifth year of training. However, depending upon the student’s specific educational program, applying for internship during the sixth
year (and thus doing internship during the 7th year) may be recommended. It is our policy that students are eligible to apply for internship only after they have passed all parts of the qualifying examination (i.e., the review paper and the dissertation proposal). The qualifying exam must be passed by June 1 prior to applying to internship the following fall. That time-line allows ample time for dissertation data collection while still on campus. If there are some extenuating circumstances making it impossible to convene the committee (e.g., committee member's unavailability), the student can petition the clinical area. However, the written products still must be turned in by the May deadline.

It is assumed that students will be seeking and accepting APA-approved internships. In selecting an internship, students should consult the APPIC Directory as well as SSCP’s Directory of Research Opportunities for Clinical Psychology Interns. Should a student wish to apply to a non-APA-approved internship, a petition indicating reasons for this should be submitted to the clinical science faculty. Please attach information about the program to the petition.

Meeting the internship requirement is reflected in enrollment in PSYC 691A and PSYC 691B during the internship year. This requires payment of 1 unit of tuition per semester and is typically not covered by USC tuition support.

Students are to follow APPIC Policy (See Appendix B) during both the application process and the notification procedure.

VII.e. Alternatives to Pursuing Training in Clinical Applications of Psychology

Some students determine, during the course of their Ph.D. training, that they plan to have careers focused on conducting research and do not intend to deliver clinical services and do not want to apply for the clinical internship. For such students, not doing the clinical internship can be a logical and good career decision albeit one that could not be foreseen until starting clinical work. Other students may determine that clinical training does not fit with their temperaments. Or, sometimes, clinical supervisors and faculty will initiate discussions with the student as to her/his suitability for clinical work.

Students who choose not to do the full educational experience in clinical applications may elect to pursue a Ph.D. in psychology but not in clinical psychology. Such students may request to fulfill the requirements for the Ph.D. in one of the other areas in the Department of Psychology (quantitative, social, developmental, or brain and cognitive sciences). Such a request must be made in writing to the Director of Graduate Studies and the pertinent Area head, and is subject to approval by faculty in the other area.

Another option is to obtain a Ph.D. in Psychology with a specialization in Psychopathology Research. Such students are not required to take the Advanced Practicum (PSYC 695) or to have clinical placements after the first year. All other clinical area required courses (including 514, 515, 619, 595a, 595b, and two clinical seminars) must be taken, along with the clinical area requirements in breadth courses and in quantitative course. Additional courses in research design and quantitative methods are recommended. Clinical area faculty members would be expected to continue to serve as research advisors for students pursuing the non-clinical specialization in Psychopathology Research.

Students who decide not to fulfill the full course of clinical training requirements should discuss this decision with both the research/academic advisor and the Director of Clinical Training and map out an alternative pathway to a Ph.D. in psychology.

VIII. Evaluation

At the end of each academic year, the clinical faculty meets as a group to review each student’s progress. This is done for all students who have not yet completed their Ph.D. The material we examine includes an updated resume and annual activities report provided by the student, course grades, written evaluations from
clinical supervisors and research advisors, and TA evaluations from students and faculty. In addition, we generally get verbal reports from all faculty members who have had contact with the student, in a class or on a research committee.

The goal of our discussion is to identify both strengths and weaknesses of the student. If a weakness seems to be interfering with the student’s progress in the program, the faculty will map out a corrective strategy (e.g., specific coursework, additional supervision, etc.)

Following this meeting, each student receives a letter from the DCT or Associate DCT summarizing the information obtained. The research/academic advisor receives a copy of the letter. That letter can provide a good opportunity for the advisor and student to review the student’s progress and map out goals for the upcoming year. The student also is welcome to request clarification or additional feedback from the DCT. At times a meeting involving the student, advisor and DCT is recommended.

IX. Mentor Model

Students are matched with a faculty member during the admissions process, but are admitted to the program, not to a specific lab group.

The research advisor is also the academic advisor. That individual is available to discuss any aspect of the student’s training, including course selection and load, financial support, etc. The student is responsible for discussing all commitments related to the practice of psychology (e.g., taking on a job, accepting an assistantship, doing volunteer work, etc.) with the research/academic advisor.

Collaboration between students and their research mentors provides one of the most important contexts of learning experiences in our program. Research mentors and advisees should be in regular contact throughout the student’s time in the program; faculty and students share the responsibility to ensure that regular contact occurs. Each relationship will be unique, hopefully fit to the needs of the student and the research. We have no intention of structuring the mentor-advisee relationship to the extent that it restricts optimal collaboration. Certainly there are times when more frequent contact is needed (e.g., when generating research ideas or analyzing data) and other times when less frequent contact might suffice (e.g., when writing the quals paper). At a minimal, we anticipate that a student meets individually with his or her mentor at least three times during each semester while in residence in the program. It is highly likely that students also will have more frequent lab or research group meeting with the mentor.

IX.a. Working with More than One Advisor or a Research Advisor not in the Clinical Science Area

It is not uncommon for a student to find that his/her interests span more than one lab and the question arises as to whether it is possible to work in more than one lab. The general answer is “yes.” In such cases, the student has a primary research affiliation and a secondary research affiliation. Before taking on the secondary commitment, the student should consult with her/his primary research advisor to consider whether she/he is on schedule with research milestones, and how his/her research progress will be impacted by branching out into a second lab.

Occasionally clinical students elect to have a research advisor who is not a member of the clinical area but is a full-time member of the Psychology Department, or has a joint appointment in Psychology with specified privileges to chair committees. In this circumstance, the student must also have a clinical area mentor who serves as the academic advisor. Both the research advisor and the academic advisor are members of all research committees, with the research advisor typically serving as chair and the academic advisor from the clinical area serving as a member of the second-year project or guidance committee. Both faculty are invited to participate in the annual evaluation, but this responsibility falls to the academic advisor.
IX.b. Switching Advisors

Although most students stay in the same lab throughout their time at USC, there is no requirement to do so and there is no stigma associated with changing mentors. Students who may be interested in changing labs should feel free to approach other faculty members to discuss the available options. The student’s research/academic advisor should be involved in these discussions early in the process.

There are number of reasons a student may wish to switch advisors—the student may develop new interests, may find it easier to work with another faculty member, or an advisor may leave for a new position. Whatever the reason for change, it is the student’s responsibility to arrange for a new advisor.

In initiating a change, there are some guidelines to follow. The possibility of changing advisors should be discussed at about the same time with both the prospective advisor and the current advisor. Neither the prospective nor the current advisor should be uninformed or receive information about the switch from a third party. It is important to make plans to complete any ongoing projects with the current advisor so that neither the student’s work nor the advisor's work suffers.

For changes due to and advisor’s leave/retirement, alternatives and plans should be discussed with the advisor.

Early in the process, the student should inform the DCT about the potential change and discuss with the DCT the best ways to handle the change. Or, if the DCT is the advisor involved, the Associate DCT should be consulted. In general, the DCT and Associate DCT are available for consultation about such changes at any step in the process.

IX.c. Troubleshooting

In the event that problems develop in the research collaboration, both the mentor and student are encouraged to discuss the difficulties together. If this discussion fails to resolve the problems, the student may speak with the Director of Clinical Training or the Associate Director of Clinical Training. That discussion will be used to figure out reasonable next steps.

X. Professional Development

Pursuing knowledge and keeping abreast of cutting edge developments in the field are continual processes. Graduate school is the time to begin engaging in professional development activities that continue throughout one’s career.

X.a. Professional Organizations

Students are encouraged to join professional organizations in psychology and/or in their specialty and to establish at least one membership by the end of the first year. Student membership provides the benefits of regular membership (e.g. journals, newsletters, notices of meetings, reduced registration at meetings). Examples of such organizations include: APA, APS, ABCT, GSA, SRCD, SBM, etc. Information about student memberships can be found on-line.

X.b. Professional Conferences and Workshops

Students are encouraged to attend professional conferences and workshops to supplement the material presented in classes, to become active members of the psychology community, to develop habitual ways of updating and refining knowledge, and to meet other professionals in the field. Attending conferences is a great way to learn about the most recent developments in specific fields of interest, as well as to expand into new interests. There are many conferences locally, as well as nationally.
Presenting research at professional conferences is an excellent way to get feedback from others in the field, to move research to completion, and to become known in broader professional circles. Several resources are available to students. The Graduate School provides funding for students who present their own research at conferences. Our department has equipment to make professional quality posters. A number of organizations, including APA, provide student travel grants to conferences or hire students to work at conferences. NRSA grants as well as faculty members’ grants also might include travel funds.

Advisors can provide information about relevant conferences and advice about writing an abstract. Students typically practice presentations or show early versions of their posters to colleagues in your lab or in the department.

Keeping a list of conferences/workshops attended may be useful in the internship application process and is a professional behavior increasingly required for licensure.

X.c. Clinical Science Speakers/Colloquia/Job Talks

Every effort should be made to attend all clinical area and departmental colloquia and presentations. Each year there are several exceptionally interesting colloquia presented in our department. The clinical area also runs a series of presentations by our own faculty, students and alumni, as well as by esteemed visiting colleagues. These colloquia and presentations provide special learning opportunities. Plus, observing others is your best training for learning how to present your own work.

X.d. USC Clinical Science Leibovitz Research Conference

The Clinical Science program sponsors its own annual research conference in which students make formal research presentations. The purpose of this meeting is to share information across labs and to prepare students for professional presentations elsewhere. It typically is scheduled toward the end of spring semester and always is one of the highlights of our year. Please be sure to mark this event in your calendar as soon as the date is announced. If there is some reason you are unable to attend, please inform the Director of Clinical Training in advance of your absence.

Each student is to present her or his research at one or more Leibovitz Conferences. Students typically present their master’s research projects but can select any piece of research conducted at USC to present. The Call for Abstracts will be announced through our weekly newsletter.

Each year we seek volunteers to review abstracts for the Leibovitz conference and to help with the conference arrangements. Volunteering to be on the review panel is useful in terms of your own learning of how to write a good abstract and, of course, is helpful to the smooth running of this conference. Previous presenters will be asked to participate on the review panel.

Xl. Personal Therapy

A common way of dealing with personal problems and high levels of stress or sorting out reactions to seeing clients (beyond what is dealt with in supervision) is to enter into therapy as a client oneself. This is not a requirement of our program (though it is a requirement of some programs); however, we do see value in students’ decisions to experience the treatment relationship as a client if they choose to do so.

The Director of the PSC and the Associate Director of Clinical Training know clinicians in the community who are good therapy referrals. Your work with the clinician would be confidential to the same degree as any other client in psychotherapy. Other than providing you with a list of names, the PSC Director, Associate DCT (and other faculty) would have no involvement or contact with your therapist except in the improbable circumstance where such contact would be allowed by law and mandated by duties of care, such as if your therapist had good cause to fear for your immediate safety and felt compelled to contact someone at USC in order to locate you. Such a circumstance would be extremely unlikely, however, and you can and should seek professional
care if you feel it is needed or would benefit you, and be confident that such a decision, on balance, would indeed most likely benefit your career.

**XI.a. Personal Problems and their Interference in Clinical Work**

It occasionally happens that personal problems interfere with one’s ability to function as a psychologist. The important issue, however, is how to deal with such problems. In line with Standard 1.13 of the APA Guidelines, it is the student’s responsibility to be alert for and to recognize if personal problems are interfering with effectiveness in clinical work. It is the student’s responsibility to refrain from activities if her/his performance is impaired and patients/colleagues/students may be harmed. As a trainee, a first step would be to discuss the possible impact of personal problems with a clinical supervisor and/or academic advisor. There are a variety of avenues to explore, including obtaining assistance with personal problems, suspending/postponing training in direct service, or taking a leave of absence from the program. A student can elect to refrain from clinical work for a semester or two but that decision can affect competitiveness for an internship and may require taking on higher clinical load during another year.

We (faculty and students) collectively share a responsibility to take action if we believe that a student’s personal problems may be harmful to clients. The appropriate action would be to bring concerns to the attention of the trainee whom you believe to be impaired. If that does not result in a corrective response and you still perceive a risk, it would be appropriate to consult with a member of the faculty.

If there is sufficient evidence supporting a student’s impairment due to an emotional, neuropsychological, or substance abuse condition, the faculty may recommend or require that: (a) the student take a leave of absence until the student no longer is impaired or (b) the student discontinue the program. Examples of behaviors that would elicit a recommendation for a leave from the program include irresponsible or erratic behavior with clients or more generally (e.g., being late for sessions, poor record keeping, flirtatious or belligerent behavior with a client, repeatedly acting in a manner that is detrimental to the client even after receiving supervision about the behavior).

If the plan is for a temporary leave from client-related work or from the program more generally, that decision should be made in consultation between the student, the faculty advisor, and the DCT. The goal will be to generate a specific plan that includes actions for amelioration or rehabilitation. Returning from the leave will be conditional on demonstrating that the plan has been enacted and has had the intended effect. Prior to taking the leave, the student’s advisor and the DCT will create a written statement that documents: (a) length and reason for leave; (b) plans for remediation; and (c) how it will be determined that the student is fit to return; and (d) plans for monitoring the student after returning.

As stated in the USC catalogue, and in compliance with the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), USC offers equal access to its degree programs to academically qualified applicants with physical, psychological or learning disabilities. USC is committed to providing appropriate, reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Disability Services and Programs (DSP) is dedicated to maintaining an environment that ensures all students with documented disabilities at USC equal access to its educational programs, activities and facilities. Accommodations are designed to level the playing field for students with disabilities, while maintaining the integrity and standards of our academic program.

**XII. Faculty-Student Relations**

We aim for collegial, mutually respectful relationships between faculty and students in the clinical psychology program. This applies among faculty and among students as well. Our program is known for its non-competitiveness and mutually supportive environment. Maintaining this ambiance requires a high level of professionalism and integrity on the part of everyone.
XII.a. Collaborative Relationships

In collaborative research: (a) faculty and student should discuss ownership of data and authorship on presentations/publications early enough in the process so that each is aware of his/her role; and (b) faculty and student should publicly acknowledge one another’s contributions at conferences, in written work etc. Guidelines about authorship and authorship order are addressed further in the APA Ethical Standards.

XII.b. Dual Relationships

A dual relationship between a faculty member and student exists when the individuals fill roles beyond what is typical in faculty-student relationships and/or the relationship is exclusionary from other faculty-student relationships. Examples of dual relationships include, but are not limited to, romantic/sexual involvements, financial partnerships, long-time personal friendships, family relations, etc. The effects of the dual relationship are not limited to the two individuals involved but potentially affect many persons in the program. Ideally, dual relationships should be avoided. In the event that a dual relationship arises, however, it is important that the dual relationship become known to others in the program rather than kept a secret.

Psychotherapeutic relations between faculty and student must be avoided altogether.

Should a dual relationship exist, the guidelines are as follows: a faculty member involved in a dual relationship should not be: (a) instructing or supervising that student; (b) participating in the research or clinical guidance of the student; or (c) participating in the evaluation process of the student. Depending upon the nature of the dual relationship, these guidelines may also be applied even if the dual relationship is terminated.

XII.c. Coercion or Discrimination in Relationships

There is no place for coercive or exploitative relationships in any professional activities or work in our program. Coercive relationships take a number of different forms. The university has explicit policies against discrimination and sexual harassment as stated in SCampus in the section on community: “As adults, we are responsible for our behavior and are fully accountable for our actions. We each must take responsibility for our awareness of racism, sexism, ageism, xenophobia, homophobia and other forms of oppression. Bigotry will not go unchallenged within this community. No one has the right to denigrate another human being on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, etc. We will not tolerate verbal or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation or violence against person or property. In this context, we do not accept alcohol or substance abuse as an excuse, reason or rationale for such abuse, harassment, intimidation or violence. Ignorance or “it was just a joke” is also not an excuse for such behavior.” Complaints related to discrimination or harassment should be directed to the Office of Equity and Diversity.

Coercive relationships additionally would be defined as taking advantage of the faulty-student relationship by requesting work unrelated to academic development, inhibiting a student’s progress in order to benefit from the student’s proficiencies, or demands on the student unrelated to the student’s professional development.

It is the responsibility of each faculty member to create an atmosphere conducive to the student’s learning and professional development. Faculty are to commit themselves to impartially evaluate student performance and avoid discriminating based on irrelevant personal or demographic characteristics (including the student’s race, sex, age, sexual orientation, religious faith or lack thereof, or national origin). Procedures for complaints related to discrimination or harassment are described in the Faculty Handbook, Section 6-F.

XII.d. Student Feedback to Professors

Students provide feedback on the instructional quality of the program through course evaluations, which are filled out every semester. Students are encouraged to write comments to give specific and detailed feedback
to their instructors. Instructional issues that arise during a course should be discussed with the course instructor. A further option would be to talk to the DCT or Associate DCT if further discussion could be useful.

XII.e. Grievances and Settling Disputes

When a dispute or grievance arises between a student and faculty member, the goal is to resolve the matter as quickly and informally as possible. The student first should attempt to resolve the matter directly with the faculty member. If this is unsuccessful, the student should seek assistance at the next level of administrative command, e.g., the DCT or the departmental chair.

The university has particular policies and procedures for certain types of student grievances. For issues related to discrimination, sexual harassment, or disputed academic evaluation, see SCampus: http://web-app.usc.edu/scampus/

XIII. Graduate Students Relations with Undergraduates

When serving as a teaching assistant or mentoring an undergraduate in the lab, the graduate student is in a position of authority with the undergraduate students. According to the Graduate Assistant Handbook (page 9), “they (graduate assistants) are governed by the same standards of conduct in the performance of their academic responsibilities as are members of the faculty (see Faculty Handbook). For purposes of emphasis, the university considers it inappropriate conduct for a teaching assistant or assistant lecturer to have a dating relationship with one of his/her students. All graduate assistants shall respect the rights and opinions of students and uphold the academic standards of the university.” You are advised to exercise foresight and reasonable caution in any dating relationship involving a USC student, especially if that student is an undergraduate, recognizing that a relationship that begins innocently may entail conflicts of interests later on that were not originally anticipated (such as if a dating partner switched majors and became a psychology major, which ultimately involved them having you or your classmates as their TA's).

All instructors, including Teaching Assistants, are required to complete the university's Harassment Prevention Training prior to the beginning of their first semester of teaching. For continuing instructors, the course must be repeated every two years (or sooner if the first course is taken during the university’s collective non-training year). The training is offered in an online format and in live training sessions, if necessary. New Teaching Assistants will not be permitted to teach until they complete the training, print the certificate of completion, and submit the documentation to their home department. For further information, see: http://capsnet.usc.edu/ProfessionalDevelopment/HarassmentPrevention/

XIV. Diversity

Our program respects diversity and promotes an understanding of cultural and individual diversity in each of our three training components—classroom activities, research experience, and clinical experience. Each clinical course is designed to address substantive issues of how ethnic, cultural, and/or gender issues interface with the content area being studied, i.e., how issues of diversity are pertinent to diagnosis, assessment, and intervention. With respect to research, we expect that a student’s research and scholarship (either master’s project, dissertation project, qualifying exam paper, or other research project) will address some aspect of diversity. In the Annual Activities report, we ask students to report on their experiences with diversity in clinical work and in research. For students who have not had opportunities to work with diverse clients or to include diversity in their research, the faculty will work with the student to correct the situation. We also expect students to monitor this and let us know if they want more opportunities with clients of underserved or diverse backgrounds.

XV. Research Ethics

As part of the research community, you are expected to comply with ethical policies of both USC and the American Psychological Association ethics code currently in force. All graduate students should take the IRB-
required online CITI Human Subjects education course within a few weeks after arriving on campus. This course is required prior to conducting any work with human subjects. HIPAA educational training also is required for any investigators using protected health information, that is, any identifiable health information relating to an individual's past, present or future physical or mental health condition.

No research with human subjects can be conducted until approval for the study has been obtained from the University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The USC IRB website contains valuable guidance about all human subjects research, e.g. even archived de-identified data sets need to be submitted to the IRB although ultimately they are likely to be designated as exempt research or Not Human Subjects. All Human Subjects applications must be submitted through iSTAR and approved and co-signed by the research advisor. The department has a representative to the IRB who can provide useful help in completing applications. There also is an IRB graduate student consultant.

Procedures for the ethical conduct of research are specified in the USC Policy on Research Ethics and Scientific Misconduct and in the APA Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct. Specifically, the USC Policy sets out ethical aspirations as well as minimum requirements that define grounds for discipline (e.g., falsification of data, plagiarism or abuse of confidentiality, improprieties of authorship, administrative and financial responsibility, violation of federal, state, or university research rules, and inappropriate behavior in the relationship of misconduct).

APA Ethical Principles Sections 6.02 through 6.26 are pertinent to conducting research and disseminating findings.

XVI. Academic Integrity

We assume that all members of our clinical area function with the highest regard for academic integrity. The following, however, is provided as a means of avoiding incidents that may reflect unfavorably upon the student, the program, and the university.

Academic integrity violations are spelled out in detail in SCampus as well as in the APA Ethical Guidelines.

These include, but are not limited to: (a) fabrication of data; (b) plagiarism; (c) the acquisition of papers or other assignments and representing them as one's own; and (d) cheating on an examination.

Additional issues that raise questions of academic integrity include: (a) submitting a paper in fulfillment of a class or research requirement if that paper, or one similar to it, was submitted in fulfillment of any other requirement; and (b) duplicate publication or republishing data. If you are uncertain about the boundaries of these issues (and sometimes these boundaries are difficult to define), be sure to seek advice and consultation from your research advisor or other faculty members.

XVII. Student Representation

Each year level (years 1 through 4+) is invited to select a student representative to attend and participate in our clinical area meetings. These representatives serve as liaisons between faculty and students, bringing student issues to the faculty and reporting to their classes on what happened in the faculty meeting. Any representative who wishes to have a particular issue addressed in the faculty meeting should contact the DCT prior to the meeting so that the issue can be put on the agenda.

Student assistance and input are welcome and needed during our admissions process although, for the protection of the individuals under consideration, the admissions folders and formal admissions discussions are limited to faculty. During admissions, it is very helpful if students talk (by phone or in person) with prospective applicants about their experiences in the program and help them feel welcome during their visits to campus. Student feedback from those discussions is welcome.
Student involvement and input also are encouraged when we are conducting faculty recruitment in the clinical area. Students are expected to attend job talks. In addition, all faculty applicants will have time set aside in their interview schedules to talk, in private, with students. Following a candidate’s visit, we will ask the student representatives to poll students as to their opinions, and present the students’ feedback at a faculty meeting. Formal discussion among faculty, however, and the final vote will be taken without the students present.

Student participation and representation in the department is encouraged, e.g., participation in the Graduate Association for Students in Psychology (GASP).

XVIII. Professional Identity and Use of Public Websites

As students enter the Ph.D. program in clinical science, they need assume the role of a professional in clinical science and USC communities. One dimension of this is taking care at all times and in all circumstances to maintain the confidentiality of personal and sensitive information related to clients, colleagues, and undergraduate students.

Another dimension is being aware of and careful about personal information posted or statements made on Facebook, MySpace, or any similar site, as well as any statements posted in any public forum. Clients have access to all such sites and the public image conveyed should be one that is appropriate for any client to read. In addition, whether on or off campus, any on-line behavior with another member of the USC community must be viewed with the same respect and recognition of professional boundaries as any face-to-face encounter. Particular care should be exercised in graduate student-undergraduate student on-line communications. Having any member of the USC community as a Facebook friend subjects your postings to public access and scrutiny and potentially subjects your posting to the USC harassment standards.

XIX. Students’ Financial Support and Financial Obligations

USC College requires that admission letters include an assurance of 5 years of financial support. The faculty recognizes the importance of financial support so that students devote themselves fully to their graduate training without feeling pressured to obtain employment unrelated to psychology. Several types of financial support are offered through faculty, department, or university resources: teaching assistantships, research assistantships, graduate school fellowships, and training grant traineeships. In addition, there are several types of support that students can generate on their own, or with the assistance of the faculty, for example, NIMH pre-doctoral awards, stipends from private granting agencies, research assistantships outside the department, etc. All support is contingent upon being a student in good standing the program, i.e., maintaining at least the minimal enrollment in coursework and maintaining academic standards. In addition, continuance of support as a research assistant or teaching assistant is contingent upon professional and competent performance in those positions.

Generally Fellowships provide a year of funding without specific responsibilities and thus are best taken when the student wants more time to complete research. Teaching assistantships and research assistantships typically require 20 hours per week of work. Students sometimes can request to be on Fellowship or TAship for a given year but all such requests also need to fit within the overall departmental funding picture and thus are decided at the departmental level.

In general, students are strongly urged to be active in applying for outside means of support (e.g., their own grant support, research or clinical opportunities off-campus). Although we require at least one semester of being a teaching assistant, other forms of funding may be more consistent with a student’s career goals (e.g., neuropsychological assessment positions with the Alzheimers Disease Research Center; independent undergraduate teaching through the Writing Program; TAship with the Joint Educational Project). Students should discuss all such option with their faculty advisor before submitting an application.

Students are strongly encouraged to apply for pre-doctoral research funding through NIH National Service Research Awards (NSRA http://grants.nih.gov/training/nrsa.htm) or more specialized fellowships through professional organizations. Even if the awards do not provide a full year of funding, they can help considerably
by providing funding for conducting research. Faculty advisors often know what sources of funding are available for specific areas of research. Applying for such awards requires time, effort, and planning. However, because master’s and dissertation research proposals are to be written in a format for the NRSA award, a good part of the work already is part of the research requirements.

In general, efforts toward obtaining extramural funding are an essential part of establishing an academic career. Applying for funding while in graduate school is likely to make it easier to get funding later on, and grant applications help build a trainee’s skill set and CV in important ways. In addition, faculty look favorably upon students who put forth such efforts to obtaining their own support and may consider this in later funding decisions.

Some funding opportunities include tuition remission whereas others do not. Please consult your advisor and your appointment letter for detailed information about the tuition covered by your funding offer. In general, University RA’s and TA’s come with some tuition remission as do University Fellowships. Private foundation research assistantships may or may not include tuition remission.

With respect to all funding options, students are advised to check with appropriate departmental staff to determine the exact level of support (as this changes from year to year) and the amount of tuition and university fees that might be covered.

**XVIII.a. Summer Support**

Some entering support packages (e.g., Provost Fellowships) include summer support but most do not. Other forms of summer support through the College, Department and University vary from year to year. When such support is available, we notify students and encourage students to apply. By and large, however, students should be proactive in seeking out summer funding options.