

Psychology Department Guidelines for the comprehensive requirements (PS891 and PS892)

5 September 2006; revised December 2009; revised September 2012; Revised June 2016.

Approved by the Psychology Department at its meeting of: January 4, 2013

1. The purpose of the two comprehensive research experiences is to give students broader experience in their area than they would normally get in their dissertation research. It is a “breadth” requirement that is intended to provide students with familiarity and knowledge in some of the different areas that make up their specific field of psychology. It is also a way for the student to demonstrate their ability to work at the level of a psychology professional having the knowledge of someone who might be asked to teach their area of psychology at the university level. To this end the research experiences are carried out under the supervision of a faculty member and second reader who are not their dissertation advisor (the dissertation advisor should be consulted in determining possible comprehensive advisors and readers). The comprehensive advisor will take the primary responsibility for the student’s progress during the comprehensive. There are occasionally very good reasons for comprehensive projects to be carried out in collaboration with faculty outside the Psychology Department. However, projects involving faculty outside the Department should be co-supervised by a member of Laurier’s Psychology Department. The second reader will normally just be asked to review and approve the initial proposal and reading list and evaluate the final document. The research experience will normally take the form of either: a research project (including a written report), or a review paper.

2. Students are required to complete PS891 and have the option to complete PS892 to fulfill an elective requirement. Students will normally register for PS891 in the second year of their PhD program and PS892 (if they choose to) in the fifth term of their PhD program (see timeline table below). By January of Years 1 and 2 of the student's program (or May 1 for students entering the program in January) the broad topic and comprehensive advisor and a second reader must be selected. The two comprehensives will normally have different primary advisors (first readers). The student with the written approval of the comprehensive advisor and reader must file a copy of the comprehensive form (Appendix A) with the area coordinator and Graduate Officer by the end of the first term in which they are registered in PS891 or PS892. It is in the student's best interest not to begin the research project or paper before having this comprehensive form approved. Note that these and following suggested deadlines are designed to help students complete their comprehensive within reasonable time limits. It is in the student's own interest that if possible they start, and potentially finish, the process earlier than these suggested dates. By March of years 1 and 2 (or July), and no later than the end of the first term in which the student is enrolled in PS891 or PS892, a preliminary reading list (typically longer for a review paper than for a research project) and short two page or so expansion of the topic must be approved by the comprehensive advisor and reader and filed (with a copy of the comprehensive form) with the area coordinator acting for the faculty in the area. The area coordinator will sign off on the topic proposal and forward the list to the Graduate Officer to be put in the student's file. If the topic and reading list are seen as being deficient or overly ambitious by the area coordinator they will consult with the comprehensive advisor to revise the proposal and list so that it conforms to the typical scope for a comprehensive before forwarding it to the Graduate Officer. This reading list and proposal will define the scope of the comprehensive and form the basis of the eventual evaluation. Six months later, August or December, a written report must be completed and given to the comprehensive advisor and reader for evaluation. The advisor and reader shall grade the document and research experience on a pass/fail basis and submit their assessment and the document to the area coordinator. In the

event that the two individuals disagree and the document receives a failing grade from one person, which cannot be resolved between the two individuals, the area coordinator shall appoint a third faculty member to review the decision. In this case the three individuals will be asked to come up with a consensus decision but if this is not possible the majority opinion will stand. If the readers agree on a failing grade a fail will be submitted to the Graduate Officer and the student. The student will be given a second opportunity to rework and rewrite the document (with advice provided by the readers) for a second submission. This will be done within two months of the notification being given to the student (but with the agreement of the Graduate Officer more time may be provided as appropriate). If the student receives a failure for this second submission they will be required to withdraw from the program. In the early fall of years 2 and (if PS 892 is completed) 3 (or spring term) the students will generally present the results of their research project, or review paper to the research seminar in their area (PS8x7, and PS8x8)

3. While it is difficult to put limits on the scale of the research project it is expected that on average it will involve about a term of half time effort on the part of the student. Sometimes the bulk of this time can be spent in learning a new methodology, or in data collection and analysis for a research project. In this case the time used to develop the written document will be expected to be adjusted appropriately, and this will be taken into consideration when evaluating the resulting document.

4. The document that results from the comprehensive research experience will be in the form of a journal article appropriate to the area (typed, double spaced, and referenced using APA style in the form of a manuscript submission). For a research project it will normally be a single study paper (or brief report in some areas). The comprehensive advisor will be available to the student to provide guidance throughout the development of the document (which may only be part of the experience for a research project), but will not be involved in reviewing and commenting on individual drafts of the document. While the student may obtain help with typing and

proofreading, it is expected that otherwise the document is the student's own work. In the case of a research project involving data collection the comprehensive advisor is normally actively involved in any necessary training of the student.

If appropriate, the student and comprehensive advisor are encouraged to submit a version of the final document for publication in an appropriate journal. In this case note of this (and its consequences) is to be provided to the Graduate Officer to put in the student's file.

5. Any faculty member in the program who has Graduate Faculty status may act as an advisor or reader for a student comprehensive research experience. In the event that in the process of carrying out the comprehensive one of the faculty members becomes, or is requested to become, the student's dissertation advisor, consultations with the area coordinator to determine how to proceed will be initiated. Normally another comprehensive advisor (perhaps the reader) will be found, but in certain circumstances with the approval of the Graduate Officer the comprehensive may proceed as initially proposed. In the case that a student (and their dissertation advisor) would like to have an individual from outside the program act as a comprehensive advisor, this shall be approved by the area coordinator and Graduate Officer. In the case that this individual is not Laurier faculty a request will be made to the Dean of Graduate Studies that they be given temporary graduate faculty status in our program following the normal procedures for this process. Normally one of the individuals reading the comprehensive will be a member of the Laurier Graduate Faculty. As noted above, if the advisor is not a member of Laurier's Psychology Department, a co-advisor from within the Psychology Department must be included in the comprehensive project.

6. The student may not register for the dissertation course (PS899) until they have successfully completed PS891. As well, students will

not normally be instructors of a course while registered in PS891 or PS892.

7. The graduate program will collect and store a copy of the successfully completed comprehensive document and these will be made available to other students as templates for them to use if the author is agreeable.

8. The Graduate Officer will be the nominal instructor for the course and responsible for the administration of the course and submitting grades to Graduate Studies and the Registrar's office as appropriate.

9. As the Psychology PhD program is divided into multiple streams with sometimes differing focuses it may be the case that a specific area has individual regulations and directives that address aspects of the comprehensive experience. In this case, where these regulations have been approved by the department, they take precedence over these guidelines. For matters that are not addressed in these area-specific documents the provisions of this document will apply. Currently the Community area has a specific document providing more extensive details specific to completing the comprehensive in the community program titled: "Comprehensive Research Experience PS891" dated July 2006 (grand-fathered as it predates this document).