

**Stephen F. Austin State University**

**COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS**

**Department of Allied Health Studies**



Ph.D. in School and  
Health Service  
Psychology  
Program

Program Approved by the  
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

---

Doctoral Student  
Handbook  
2026-2027

---

Last Revised: May 2026

## Table of Contents

<b><i>General Information about the Program</i></b> .....	<b>5</b>
Program Mission.....	5
Program Aims .....	5
Program Overview.....	5
Program's Contributions .....	6
Program Characteristics .....	7
Accreditation .....	7
State Licensure and Certification .....	8
<b><i>The Faculty</i></b> .....	<b>10</b>
Core Faculty.....	10
Other Essential Staff .....	11
Affiliated Faculty.....	11
<b><i>Facilities and Equipment</i></b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b><i>Training</i></b> .....	<b>14</b>
Degree Requirement Policy .....	14
Program Residency and Modality .....	14
Program Learning Outcomes .....	15
Program Curriculum .....	16
Degree Plan.....	21
<b><i>Admissions and Policies</i></b> .....	<b>22</b>
Admission Requirements .....	22
Admission Decisions.....	22
Advanced Placement.....	22
Non-Discrimination Policy .....	23
<b><i>Students' Rights and Responsibilities</i></b> .....	<b>23</b>
Students' Rights .....	23
Responsibilities.....	24
<b><i>Program Expectations</i></b> .....	<b>24</b>
Continuous Progress .....	24
Professional Development .....	24
Grade Standards and Quality Points .....	24

Time Limitations .....	25
<b><i>Advising and Deviations from Plans or Requirements .....</i></b>	<b>25</b>
Advising.....	25
Shifts in Course Schedules .....	25
Independent Study .....	25
Deviations from the Official Course Sequence.....	26
Changing the Degree Plan and/or Program Requirements .....	26
<b><i>Student Support Opportunities and Resources .....</i></b>	<b>26</b>
Graduate Assistantship.....	26
Professional Activities.....	27
<b><i>Student Performance Evaluation .....</i></b>	<b>29</b>
Retention and Dismissal .....	34
Inactive Status .....	34
Leave of Absence .....	34
Due Process .....	35
Grievance Procedures .....	36
Filing an Appeal or Academic Grievance .....	36
<b><i>Practicum Requirements .....</i></b>	<b>37</b>
Practicum Requirements .....	37
Supervision and Evaluation .....	38
<b><i>Doctoral Internship Training .....</i></b>	<b>40</b>
<b><i>Eligibility .....</i></b>	<b>40</b>
<b><i>Doctoral Dissertation Requirements and Procedures .....</i></b>	<b>43</b>
Doctoral Dissertation Committee.....	43
The Dissertation Process.....	43

Dear Student,

On behalf of the faculty, staff, and students of the Department of Allied Health at Stephen F. Austin State University, we welcome you to the Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program. Whether you are coming to us from near or far, you are joining a dynamic community of faculty and students who are engaged in learning, teaching, research, and professional leadership in the field. With the ongoing advancement of research and professional practice, we believe that the spirit of inquiry and the dedication to professionalism that flows from the scientist-practitioner model will be a career-long gift. We hope you will find our program an exciting, stimulating environment in which to grow professionally and personally.

The role of a psychologist is a complex one that requires a variety of technical skills and personal qualities to be successful. Care has been taken to sort out the skills, knowledge, and qualities that should prepare you to work effectively with future clients within varied work settings. However, no training program can singularly develop all that is necessary. Your professional development ultimately depends upon your own abilities, desires, and initiative to learn and grow. By joining our program, you are also joining the specialties of health service psychology. Your experience as part of the psychology community will be enhanced by becoming a student member of such organizations as the American Psychological Association (APA), Texas Psychological Association (TPA), National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), and Texas Association of School Psychologists (TASP), among others. We strongly encourage membership in professional organizations and active engagement in our program-level student organization, which will prove beneficial in becoming a part of our local community.

The program faculty members have prepared this handbook to serve as a guide while you complete the doctoral program. We suggest you use it as your first source of reference for any questions you may have; however, please remember that the faculty is the best point of contact you have with the program.

## General Information about the Program

Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) is a regional university located in Nacogdoches, TX, a thriving historic community nestled in the beautiful piney woods of East Texas, only 132 miles from Houston and 165 miles from Dallas. With a student population of approximately 13,000, SFA has a strong reputation for excellence.

Located within the SFA College of Health Professions and Department of Allied Health Studies, the Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program has a long-standing commitment to engagement in cutting edge research, training practices, and the integration of technology. The SFA Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program was authorized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) in 2009, and the 99-hour post-baccalaureate Ph.D. track was authorized by THECB in 2018. Since the beginning, the doctoral program has been dedicated to producing ethical, responsible, and competent school and clinical-practice psychologists who employ scientific knowledge and methods of critical and creative problem-solving.

### Program Mission

The program provides primary training in school psychology while also preparing students for clinical/counseling practice. It adopts an integrated training approach that combines assessment and intervention strategies to better understand human behavior when working with children, youth, adults and families.

### Program Aims

- To prepare psychologists who are knowledgeable and skilled in the health service specialty areas of school and clinical/ counseling psychology.
- To equip psychologists to deliver evidence-based clinical services effectively.
- To train psychologists who are competent in research.

In achieving its aims, the program implements a thoughtful and coherent plan for producing ethical, responsible, and competent psychologists who employ scientific knowledge and critical and creative problem-solving methods. The program also provides graduates with relevant knowledge and experiences about the role of cultural and individual differences in psychological phenomena as they relate to the science and practice of health service psychology.

### Program Overview

The Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program at SFA is a residential program grounded in a scientist-practitioner model in which practice, research, and theory are intentionally integrated. Within this framework, the program prepares psychologists who are knowledgeable and skilled in the health service specialty areas of school psychology and clinical /counseling psychology. Students are trained to function competently in school, clinical, and community settings, serving children, adolescents, adults and families through assessment, intervention, consultation, and prevention-focused services.

The program conceptualizes the scientist-practitioner as a professional who: (1) critically consumes empirically supported practices, (2) engages in reflective and ethical decision-making in professional contexts, and (3) systematically evaluates outcomes by collecting and interpreting data within their own service settings. Whether working within school systems or clinical environments, students are expected to ground their work in scientific evidence while remaining responsive to biological, developmental, sociological/cultural, and contextual factors that influence child, adolescent, and adult functioning in school and out of school settings.

The program adheres to the principle that research and practice should continually inform one another. Applied experiences generate meaningful questions, and scientific inquiry provides tools for answering them. Through coursework, supervised practica, school-based assessment activities, clinical therapy training, consultation experiences, and dissertation research, students learn to integrate scientific knowledge into all aspects of professional service delivery. They are prepared to advocate for empirically supported interventions in schools and clinical settings, to evaluate program effectiveness, and to uphold the legal and ethical standards of the psychology profession.

Ultimately, graduates leave the program prepared not only to provide high-quality school psychological and clinical services, but also to think scientifically about their work, contribute to the knowledge base of the field, and promote the well-being of children and families across diverse service environments.

### Program's Contributions

As one of four doctoral programs at SFA, the Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology plays an important role in responding to the increasing demand for highly trained school psychologists and clinical practitioners across Texas and nationally. The program is intentionally designed to prepare professionals who can serve children, adolescents, families, and schools with competence, integrity, and scientific rigor. In doing so, it directly advances the university's mission by addressing critical mental health, academic, and behavioral needs within the region and beyond.

Faculty and students contribute to this mission not only through training, but also through research and service. Grounded in a scientist-practitioner model, the program emphasizes the use of evidence-based assessment, intervention, and consultation practices. Faculty scholarship and student research projects focus on topics relevant to school systems, clinical populations, and community mental health, reinforcing SFA's identity as an institution committed to both discovery and meaningful application. Through these efforts, the program strengthens the university's role as a center for quality education, research, and service.

Community engagement is woven into the structure of the program. The School Psychology Assessment Center (SPAC), for example, provides low-cost psychoeducational assessments to SFA students and members of the surrounding community, expanding access to essential evaluation services. Under faculty supervision, doctoral students conduct comprehensive assessments, integrate data, and provide feedback to families—gaining hands-on experience while serving a real community need. In addition, faculty and students collaborate with local school districts, clinics, and other service agencies to support consultation, intervention planning,

and program development. These partnerships extend the university's impact and position SFA as an active, trusted community partner.

## Program Characteristics

### Acceptance Rates

The program accepts 8-12 students per year and maintains an enrollment of 35-42 students in any given year. Although there have been ups and downs in the past years, the average number of degrees awarded per year is 6, a trend that has been maintained over the past 4 years.

### Student Body Composition

Racial/ethnic minority enrollment is currently at approximately 50% of the total doctoral enrollment in the School and Health Service Psychology. There has been a consistent number of individuals identifying as Latino, Black, two or more races, and/or as international students since 2021. Currently, about 80% of the students are female. Students come from diverse socioeconomic and geographic backgrounds, and most enrolled students hold bachelor's or master's degrees in psychology or education.

### Time to Completion

Although the time limit for completing the doctoral degree is 10 years, the Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program strongly encourages full-time students to complete their doctoral program within 5 years of their acceptance into the program. Students accepted under *advanced placement* can complete the program within 4 years.

### Employment

All graduates within one year of graduation are currently employed by public schools, private practices and/or universities. Based on a survey completed by graduates from 2020-2024, all graduates are currently employed in the field. Five (5) are employed at K-12 campuses, five (5) work in private practice, one (1) in a college/university setting, one (1) in a combined K-12 campus and private practice, and one (1) in a combined college/university and private practice.

All graduates within the last 4 years hold a Licensed of School Psychology (LSP) in Texas. The majority also are Provisionally Licensed Psychologists (PLP) in Texas and two have secured the Licensed Psychologist (LP) status. Salary ranges were between \$61,000 and \$100,000 per year.

## Accreditation

Stephen F. Austin State University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board as a Bachelor's, Master's, Specialist, and Doctoral degree granting institution. The SFA Graduate School adheres to the Guidelines of the Council of Graduate Schools in the United States, and the SFA Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program adheres to the Council's charge to protect the rights of students.

***The Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology is not currently accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA). The program is actively engaged in the accreditation process and is seeking APA accreditation. Applying for or seeking accreditation does not guarantee that accreditation will be granted.***

\*Questions related to the program's accredited status should be directed to the Commission on Accreditation:

Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation  
American Psychological Association  
750 1st Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002  
Phone: (202) 336-5979 / E-mail: [apaaccred@apa.org](mailto:apaaccred@apa.org)  
Web: [www.apa.org/ed/accreditation](http://www.apa.org/ed/accreditation)

### State Licensure and Certification

Graduates of this program qualify for licensure as a Licensed Psychologist (LP) and as Licensed School Psychology (LSP) in Texas. Licensure requires meeting the Rules of the Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council (BHEC) and Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (TSBEP). In addition to the doctoral degree in School and Health Service Psychology, students must pass a national exam for licensure: the Examination for the Professional Practice of Psychology (EPPP) for licensure as a psychologist (doctoral level) or as a licensed psychological associate (Master's level); or the National School and Health Service Psychology Examination (ETS/NTE #40) for licensure as a Licensed School Psychologist (LSP). Both levels of licensure, Licensed Psychologist and Licensed Specialist in School Psychology, require the passing of a state jurisprudence exam as well. Other requirements include a one-year doctoral internship supervised by licensed psychologists, and a one-year postdoctoral experience supervised by a licensed psychologist. Provisional licensure must be acquired prior to full licensure. EPPP and the jurisprudence examination must be passed prior to this. TSBEP Rules change frequently. It is the responsibility of the student to remain informed of these changes. TSBEP has set rigid deadlines and guidelines, and students should request their information packet, and review it carefully to be well prepared for licensure. The licensing process is an expensive process. Current information can be found on the [BHEC website](#).

State Licensure as a LSP in the State of Texas includes meeting the requirements of the BHEC and TSBEP. Subsequent to a degree in School and Health Service Psychology from a regionally accredited university, candidates must pass a national exam for licensure: the Praxis School Psychologist exam. **All students in the SFA Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program are required to take and pass the Praxis School Psychologist examination during the summer prior to enrollment in SPSY 6154 School and Health Service Psychology Internship.**

Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council  
333 Guadalupe, Suite 3-900  
Austin, TX 78701  
512-305-7700  
[www.bhec.texas.gov](http://www.bhec.texas.gov)

NASP offers certification as a Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP). To obtain certification as an NCSP, students must complete the NCSP examination and have their credentials successfully reviewed by the NCSP Board (administered by NASP). Continued NCSP certification requires ongoing professional development with 75 documented clock hours of in-service education every three years. An application packet for the NCSP may be obtained from:

National Association of School Psychologists  
4340 East West Highway, Suite 402  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
301-657-0270

## The Faculty

The program faculty body is composed of state licensed and/or nationally certified psychologists, school psychologists, or professionals having expertise in a content area deemed relevant to the training of school and health service psychologists. Graduate training in School and Health Service Psychology is complemented by the expertise and resources provided by faculty from the different departments across Stephen F. Austin State University. This interdisciplinary approach affords students a broader perspective of the field of psychology. The faculty of the program pride themselves in the practice of offering students individualized guidance and supervision as well as opportunities for continuous personal interaction between students and professors. Ethical practice is modeled, expected, and enforced. Ethics and professional practice standards are discussed across several classes and applied in practica and internship.

Program faculty members are dedicated to working with students in a close mentoring relationship to prepare them for doctoral-level practice and research. Students are encouraged to pursue outside experiences and professional interactions (e.g., professional organization membership, presentations at regional and national conferences, and publications in refereed professional journals). In particular, faculty are dedicated to working with students from diverse and multicultural backgrounds and are particularly interested in promoting the achievements of students from underrepresented populations.

### Core Faculty

**Dr. Nina Harness (1.0 FTE)** acts as the *Program Director*. In her role as Program Director, Dr. Harness oversees the program's operations, including curriculum development, faculty recruitment, student admissions, and overall program quality. Dr. Harness's expertise in the field of school psychology and licenses in Texas and Louisiana enable her to ensure that the program offers a high-quality education that meets the needs of students pursuing careers in the field. Dr. Harness is an award-winning licensed clinical and school psychologist (Texas & Louisiana), a Nationally Certified School Psychologist, a Licensed School Psychologist in the state of Texas and a Certified Professional Life Coach. She is the director of the School Psychology Assessment Center. Her research interests include locus of control and self-esteem, findings of evidence-based treatments for children with autism spectrum disorder, psychological assessments, the significance of natural hair and personal presentation in multicultural men and women, the use of social media in education, and holistic health and wellness.

**Dr. Luis E. Aguerrevere (1.0 FTE)** is responsible for *assessment, student recruitment, and retention*. He helps to assess the program's effectiveness and identify areas for improvement, ensuring that the program meets its goals and objectives. He also works to recruit and retain a diverse student body. Dr. Aguerrevere's work helps to ensure that the program continues to attract and retain students who are committed to making a difference in the field of psychology. Dr. Aguerrevere is from Barquisimeto, Venezuela. He has a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Tennessee Technological University and a Master of Science and Ph.D. in Applied Biopsychology from the University of New Orleans, with a concentration in Clinical Psychology. He is a licensed psychological associate (LPA)-independent practice in the state of Texas. Dr. Aguerrevere has expertise in research and publications focused on the effectiveness of neuropsychological assessments in detecting poor effort in traumatic brain injury, chronic pain,

and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. He has supervised over fifteen dissertations in his tenure.

**Dr. Alison Bradford (1.0 FTE)** serves as the *Practicum Training Director* for the Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program. She is responsible for developing and implementing the training programs that prepare our students for internship and beyond. Dr. Bradford works closely with all faculty members and practicum supervisors to help ensure training sites integrate theoretical knowledge with direct practical experience. In short, Dr. Bradford's work ensures that students receive the best possible training and are prepared to make a positive impact in their future careers. She holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in English, a Master's degree in School Psychology, and a Doctorate in School Psychology. Prior to joining the program, Dr. Bradford worked for six years as a Licensed School Psychologist (LSP) in East Texas Independent School Districts. Currently, she is a Provisionally Licensed Psychologist (PLP) supervised by Dr. Frankie Clark.

### Other Essential Staff

#### **Internship Director**

**Dr. Frankie Clark (0.3 FTE)** acts as the *program supervisor of internship* courses for the Ph.D. program. Her 30 years of providing mental health services to the community significantly contribute to shaping the practical experiences and professional development of those students in the internship year. Dr. Clark is also the Training Director of the APA-accredited SFA Charter School Doctoral Internship Program, which corresponds to her remaining 0.7 FTE.

#### **Administrative Assistant**

**Mrs. Jennifer Fry (0.2 FTE)** is the program's administrative assistant. Mrs. Fry handles routine inquiries from both prospective and current students, assists with scheduling meetings, and provides logistical support for faculty members. She helps organize advising sessions, maintain student records, and coordinate student activities related to the program.

### Affiliated Faculty

#### **Dr. Michael Walker**

*PhD in Clinical Psychology*

Dr. Michael Walker brings substantial expertise in clinical psychology, behavioral assessment, ethical decision-making, and student support services that meaningfully strengthen the School and Health Service Psychology doctoral program. He earned both his master's degree and Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Mississippi and currently serves as Associate Professor of Psychology at Stephen F. Austin State University. Dr. Walker's teaches ethics, learning theory, history and systems, lifespan development courses. In addition to his academic responsibilities, he has held significant administrative and student-support leadership roles at SFA, including serving as Assistant Dean of Student Affairs for Support Services and Title IX Coordinator.

#### **Dr. Amanda Rudolph**

*Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction*

Dr. Rudolph brings extensive expertise in curriculum design, instructional strategies, and teacher

education. She teaches core courses in educational research methods, guiding students in understanding quantitative and qualitative approaches to inquiry, research design, data analysis, and the ethical considerations inherent in conducting research in educational and psychological settings.

**Dr. Joseph Kartye**

*Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology*

Dr. Kartye is a licensed psychologist with clinical expertise in psychotherapy, assessment, and counselor training. He teaches a range of therapy and intervention courses, with an emphasis on evidence-based practices, therapeutic techniques, and multicultural competence. His instruction prepares students for practicum placements and future licensure.

**Dr. Glen McCuller**

*Ph.D. in Special Education*

With a focus on behavioral interventions and inclusive practices, Dr. McCuller teaches courses related to Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and behavioral supports for individuals with developmental and learning differences. His courses equip students with the theoretical knowledge and practical skills necessary to implement behaviorally-informed strategies across diverse settings.

**Dr. Sarah Savoy**

*Ph.D. in Socioemotional Development*

Dr. Savoy specializes in the developmental trajectories of emotional and social functioning across the lifespan. She teaches courses in developmental psychology and social psychology, integrating foundational theory with contemporary research to help students understand socioemotional development in diverse populations and contexts.

## Facilities and Equipment

The Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program is located within the Human Services and Telecommunications building (HSTC). The HSTC houses programs in School Psychology, Professional Counseling, and Communication Disorders. It includes modern Zoom classrooms and labs with technology that supports teaching, service, and research activities. Each program faculty has an office and assigned desktop or laptop computer. These computers are replaced every five years. Typically, two graduate students share an office for semi-private office hours. The HSTC has a network infrastructure that accommodates gigabit Ethernet to the desktop for high-speed networking. It contains Interactive Television classrooms with H.323 protocol and H.320 backward compatibility. There is a digital video editing facility that allows users to stream media feeds for interactive internet-distributed multimedia content. All classrooms have Zoom and ethernet connectivity for student use as well as multimedia presentation capability, internet access, document cameras and sophisticated built-in computer systems. In addition, the building and campus offer wireless connection capability for students.

In addition to the above facilities and resources, the HSTC also contains the School Psychology Assessment Center (SPAC), Human Neuroscience Laboratory (HNL), Human Services Counseling Clinic, Stanley Speech and Hearing Clinic, and Cole Audiology Laboratory. The SPAC, HNL and Counseling Clinic serve as training facilities for School and Health Service Psychology doctoral students:

- The SPAC at SFA is a graduate training facility that serves both the university community and the surrounding areas of Nacogdoches, Texas. It offers psychological assessments for various disorders, including ADHD, learning disabilities, depression, anxiety, autism spectrum disorders, and more. These assessments are administered by school psychology graduate students under the supervision of licensed psychologists, providing hands-on training while also delivering affordable mental health services to the public.
- The HNL is a state-of-the-art facility focused on understanding how the brain supports human behavior. In this laboratory, Dr. Luis Aguerrevere offers training in quantitative electroencephalography (qEEG), eye tracking technology, biofeedback, and neurofeedback systems.
- The Counseling Clinic offers therapeutic services conducted by graduate students who operate under the guidance of licensed psychologists and professional counselors. It also is a training facility for graduate students working toward their advanced degrees, serving individuals, couples, families, and community groups.

## Training

Situated within the Department of Allied Health in the College of Health Professions, the doctoral program emphasizes the professional identity of school and health service psychologists within the broader field of psychology. The program also delivers an education that values and respects cultural diversity among students, faculty, and service recipients. The SFA Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program stresses the applied scientific nature of psychology and its professional and ethical responsibilities to those it serves while respecting the cultural diversity of those with whom the faculty and students work. Training orientations combine assessment and intervention as well as the social ecological model as the central unifying scientific themes in understanding human behavior in working with children, youth, families, and schools.

## Degree Requirement Policy

To successfully complete the program, students must complete all degree requirements. The Ph.D. program is a full-time on-campus program that typically requires five years of post-baccalaureate study to complete, including four years of coursework followed by a one-year full-time doctoral internship. A minimum residency of at least the first four years of full-time study must be met. Students are required to complete the program within ten years of the initial enrollment date. A minimum of 72 credit hours, 600 practicum hours, 1750 internship hours, and completion of a faculty committee-approved dissertation are required for successful completion of the Ph.D. program. The curriculum is designed to support students in meeting these requirements. The degree plan (see below) is designed to provide students with the knowledge and training necessary for entry into the field of school and health service psychology. The curriculum was developed by the faculty to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively with members of the public.

Students demonstrate their readiness for entry-level practice in school and health service psychology by meeting the following requirements:

1. Complete all required and elective coursework with a “B” or better
2. Complete all practicum training with a “P” (pass)
3. Obtain a Pass on the Comprehensive Exam
4. Successfully complete an Internship
5. Complete and successfully defend a dissertation
6. If applicable, the successful completion of any remediation plan implemented to support the student in meeting expectations

## Program Residency and Modality

To ensure a cohesive, immersive, and developmentally appropriate doctoral training experience, the program requires a minimum residency period of four (4) consecutive years of full-time study (3-years for advanced placement). This residency requirement is critical for fostering intensive mentoring relationships, professional socialization, academic rigor, and community building.

During this required residency period:

- Most coursework during the fall and spring (long) semesters in the first three years (2 years for advanced placement) are completed through in-person, face-to-face instruction. This approach ensures that students engage in rich academic discourse, receive direct faculty supervision, and benefit from immediate feedback and peer collaboration in a structured learning environment.
- Summer courses may be offered in either face-to-face or synchronous live-stream formats, depending on course design and instructional needs. Regardless of delivery mode, all summer coursework maintains high levels of interaction and academic integrity consistent with the program's expectations for doctoral-level education.
- Practicum courses, which typically occur in the third and fourth years of study, and are delivered via synchronous live-stream. This modality provides students with the necessary flexibility to secure and engage in supervised field placements in a variety of settings while continuing to participate in structured academic support and supervision from program faculty.

This structure supports compliance with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board requirements and aligns with APA accreditation standards emphasizing the importance of face-to-face training for the development of professional competencies in psychology.

### Program Learning Outcomes

1. **Human Diversity:** Candidates should demonstrate awareness and sensitivity when working professionally with diverse individuals, groups, and communities.
2. **Psychoeducational Foundations:** Candidates must demonstrate appropriate knowledge of the historical, political, and legal aspects, as well as policies and procedures that impact the fields of psychology and education.
3. **Content Knowledge:** Candidates must demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge of biological, psychological, sociocultural, ethical, and legal factors to understand both typical and atypical behavior.
4. **Research & Technology:** Candidates must demonstrate the ability to apply their knowledge of research, statistics, and evaluation methods to inform all areas of practice, from selecting appropriate methods for collecting information to making recommendations for interventions based on empirical evidence.
5. **Professional Skills and Dispositions:** Candidates must conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the values and attitudes associated with the American Psychological Association policies and guidelines. The candidate will demonstrate knowledge, skills, and professional work characteristics/dispositions, effectively applying them in practice.
6. **Application of Principles and Procedures:** Assessment should demonstrate candidates' effective application of knowledge, skills, and dispositions in the practice of School and Health Service psychology. As part of this assessment, each candidate must document the ability to use both problem-solving (client-centered) and process-focused (consultee-centered) models of consultation.

7. **Communication:** The candidate must demonstrate proficiency in communication skills relevant to the field of psychology, both written and spoken. This may include, but is not limited to, effective writing for different purposes, proficient presentation skills for various audiences and purposes, and appropriate interpersonal skills.

## Program Curriculum

### Alignment with APA

The APA Commission on Accreditation's [Standards of Accreditation](#) outline four categories of Discipline Specific Knowledge and nine Profession-Wide Competencies. The program curriculum has been designed to train students in each of these key areas, as described below.

### Discipline-Specific Knowledge (DSK)

The Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program at SFA utilizes a comprehensive curriculum to train all students in APA's Discipline-Specific Knowledge (DSK) areas.

The four DSK categories outlined by APA are:

1. History and Systems of Psychology
2. Basic Content Areas in Scientific Psychology (*Affective Aspects of Behavior, Biological Aspects of Behavior, Cognitive Aspects of Behavior, Developmental Aspects of Behavior, Social Aspects of Behavior*)
3. Advanced Integrative Knowledge in Scientific Psychology.
4. Research Methods, Statistical Analysis, and Psychometrics (Research Methods, Statistical Analysis, Psychometrics)

Courses are designed to address these DSK categories by providing students with the requisite foundational knowledge and skills in psychology for the practice of school psychology and beyond. Students are required to complete a range of courses on topics such as developmental psychology, cognitive psychology, social psychology, social/personality theory, and neuroscience, among others. In addition, students are required to complete courses in research methods, statistics, and psychometrics which provide them with the necessary skills to design and conduct research in psychology.

### General Knowledge Courses

<b>Class</b>	<b>APA's DSK Area</b>
History and Systems (SPSY 6349)	<i>History and Systems of Psychology</i>
Learning Theory (SPSY 6301)	<i>Affective Aspects of Behavior and Cognitive Aspects of Behavior</i>
Human Neuroscience (SPSY 6314)	<i>Biological Aspects of Behavior</i>
Human Growth and Development (SPSY 6344)	<i>Developmental Aspects of Behavior</i>
Social Bases of Behavior and Personality (SPSY 6343)	<i>Social Aspects of Behavior</i>
Biopsychological Interventions (SPSY 6317) Adv. Neuropsychological Assessment (SPSY 6316)	<i>Advanced Integrative Knowledge of Basic Discipline-Specific Content Areas (Biological/Affective)</i>
Quantitative Research Methods (SPSY 6331)	<i>Research Methods</i>
Introduction to Educational Research (RSCH 6311)	<i>Research Methods</i>
Multivariate Statistics (SPSY 6335)	<i>Statistical Analysis</i>
Psychometrics and Clinical Research (SPSY 6334)	<i>Psychometrics</i>

### Profession-Wide Competencies (PWC)

The Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program at Stephen F. Austin State University has developed a comprehensive plan to ensure that students develop proficiency in the nine Profession-Wide Competencies (PWCs) through active participation in didactic, research, and experiential learning.

The nine PWCs outlined by APA are:

1. Research
2. Ethical and Legal Standards
3. Individual and Cultural Diversity
4. Professional Values and Attitudes
5. Communication and Interpersonal Skills
6. Assessment
7. Intervention
8. Supervision
9. Consultation and interprofessional/interdisciplinary skills

#### 1. Research

To ensure competency in research and evaluation, the program offers coursework and supervised training experiences in research methods and statistics, as well as opportunities for students to conduct research and program evaluations.

- Introduction to Educational Research (RSCH 6311)
- Quantitative Research Methods (SPSY 6331)
- Psychometrics and Clinical Research (SPSY 6334)
- Multivariate Statistics (SPSY 6335)
- Single Subjects Design (SPSY 6336)

- Dissertation (SPSY 6138)

## 2. Ethical

To ensure competency in ethical and legal standards, the program provides coursework and supervised training experiences in professional ethics and legal requirements relevant to the practice of School and Health Service psychology. Students are required to demonstrate knowledge of professional ethical standards and legal requirements, as well as the ability to apply them in practice.

- Ethics (SPSY 6348)
- Introduction to School and Health Service Psychology (SPSY 6342)
- Practicum (SPSY 6353)

## 3. Diversity

To ensure competency in diversity, the program provides coursework and supervised training experiences that emphasize multicultural competence, cultural humility, and the application of psychological principles to diverse populations. Students are required to demonstrate the ability to recognize, respect, and adapt services to cultural, linguistic, and individual differences.

- Multicultural Issues and Systems in Schools (SPSY 6323)
- Severe Developmental Disabilities/Autism (SPSY 6305)
- Practicum (SPSY 6353)

## 4. Professional

To ensure competency in professional identity and behavior, the program emphasizes coursework and supervised experiences that focus on consultation, supervision, and the role of psychologists in school and health service settings. Students must demonstrate professional responsibility, accountability, and commitment to lifelong learning.

- Introduction to School and Health Service Psychology (SPSY 6342)
- Consultation and Supervision (SPSY 6303)
- Practicum (SPSY 6353)

## 5. Communication and Interpersonal Skills

To ensure competency in communication and interpersonal skills, the program requires coursework and training experiences that promote clear written and oral communication, collaborative problem-solving, and effective interpersonal interaction with clients, families, and professionals. Students demonstrate these skills in both academic and applied settings.

- Introduction to Educational Research (RSCH 6311)
- Psychometrics and Clinical Research (SPSY 6334)
- Introduction to School and Health Service Psychology (SPSY 6342)
- Dissertation (SPSY 6138)
- Practicum (SPSY 6353)

## 6. Assessment

To ensure competency in assessment, the program provides coursework and supervised training experiences in various assessment techniques, including cognitive, behavioral, and social-emotional assessments. Students also are required to demonstrate proficiency in administering,

scoring, and interpreting standardized tests commonly used in school and in clinical/counseling psychology practice.

- Child and Adolescent Psychopathology (SPSY 6346)
- Child Assessment (SPSY 6315)
- Individual Intelligence Testing (SPSY 6312)
- Psychoeducational Assessment (SPSY 6311)
- Neuropsychological Assessment (SPSY 6316)
- Practicum (SPSY 6353)

#### 7. Intervention

To ensure competency in intervention and prevention, the program offers coursework and supervised training experiences in evidence-based interventions for a wide range of behavioral, academic, and social-emotional problems. Students are required to demonstrate proficiency in designing and implementing interventions, as well as evaluating their effectiveness.

- Child and Adolescent Therapy (SPSY 6321)
- Advanced Family Therapy (SPSY 6322)
- Applied Behavior Analysis (SPSY 6306)
- Practicum (SPSY 6353)

#### 8. Supervision

To ensure competency in supervision, the program offers coursework and supervised practice focused on supervisory skills, including providing constructive feedback, fostering professional growth, and ensuring ethical practice. Students demonstrate competency by applying supervisory techniques in practicum and supervised settings.

- Consultation and Supervision (SPSY 6303)
- Practicum (SPSY 6353)

#### 9. Consultation

To ensure competency in consultation and collaboration, the program provides coursework and supervised training experiences in the principles and techniques of consultation and collaboration with other professionals, parents, and community members. Students are required to demonstrate proficiency in developing and implementing collaborative interventions that involve multiple stakeholders.

- Consultation and Supervision (SPSY 6303)
- Practicum (SPSY 6353)

### **Alignment with NASP**

The Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology at SFA is consistent with National Association for School Psychologist requirements in multiple ways:

## Alignment with NASP Training Standards –

- *Comprehensive Curriculum:* The program covers NASP’s 10 Domains of Practice through its coursework and field experiences, including data-based decision making, consultation and collaboration, academic and behavioral interventions, diversity, research, legal/ethical practice, and program evaluation. These align with NASP's Graduate Preparation Standards.
- *Integration of Theory, Research, and Practice:* Following a scientist-practitioner model, the program blends empirical foundations with applied skills, a core NASP expectation for specialist- and doctoral-level preparation.
- *Supervised Field Experiences:* Practicum and internship sequences meet NASP requirements for supervised experiences in school and related settings, including at least 600 school-based internship hours and training under credentialed school psychologists.
- *Assessment and Intervention Competence:* Multiple courses and practica develop student competence in psychoeducational, cognitive, behavioral, and neuropsychological assessment, as well as evidence-based academic, behavioral, and social-emotional interventions.
- *Cultural and Individual Diversity:* The program integrates diversity and multicultural issues across coursework, practica, and research, consistent with NASP's emphasis on culturally responsive practice.
- *Ethical and Legal Practice:* The curriculum includes dedicated ethics coursework plus ongoing integration of professional standards into training, meeting NASP’s expectation for competence in legal and ethical service delivery.
- **NCSP Eligibility** – All students take and must pass the Praxis School Psychologist Examination before internship, positioning them to apply for NASP’s *Nationally Certified School Psychologist* credential.

## Degree Plan

The plan of study is developed prior to admission into the School and Health Service Psychology program and must be reviewed and approved by the full body of program faculty, copied, and sent to the Graduate Dean. A copy of the approved plan of study is forwarded to the student and maintained in the local files with the program secretary. Below is an example degree plan for students standard placement:

### Sample Degree Plan for Standard Placement (99- hours)

#### Year 1

##### *Fall*

RSCH 6311 – Introduction to Educational Research

SPSY 6342 – Introduction to School and Health Service Psychology

SPSY 6311 – Psychoeducational Assessment

##### *Spring*

SPSY 6348 – Ethics

SPSY 6347 – Advanced School Psychology

SPSY 6312 – Individual Intelligence Testing

##### *Summer*

SPSY 6346 – Child and Adolescent Psychopathology

SPSY 6344 – Human Growth and Development

#### Year 2

##### *Fall*

SPSY 6331 – Quantitative Research Methods

SPSY 6315 – Child Assessment

SPSY 6314 – Human Neuroscience

##### *Spring*

SPSY 6321 – Child and Adolescent Therapy

SPSY 6301 – Learning and Cognition

SPSY 6334 – Psychometrics

##### *Summer*

SPSY 6343 – Social Bases of Behavior and Personality

SPSY 6323 – Multicultural Issues in Schools

#### Year 3

##### *Fall*

SPSY 6306 – Applied Behavior Analysis

SPSY 6317 -- Biopsychological Interventions

SPSY 6303 – Consultation and Supervision

##### *Spring*

SPSY 6353 – Practicum

SPSY 6335 – Multivariate Statistics

SPSY 6316 Neuropsychological Assessment

##### *Summer*

SPSY 6336 – Single Subject Design

SPSY 6322 – Advanced Family Therapy

#### Year 4

##### *Fall*

SPSY 6353 – Practicum

SPSY 6138 – Dissertation

SPSY 6305 – Severe Developmental Disabilities/Autism

##### *Spring*

SPSY 6353 – Practicum

SPSY 6349 – History and Systems

SPSY 6138 – Dissertation

##### *Summer*

SPSY 6138 – Dissertation

PRAXIS

Comprehensive Examination

#### Year 5

##### *Fall*

SPSY 6154 – Internship

##### *Spring*

SPSY 6154 – Internship

## Admissions and Policies

### Admission Requirements

The following are the minimum core requirements to apply to the Ph.D Program:

- Completion of a bachelor's degree in psychology or closely related field from an accredited college or university verified by submission of undergraduate transcripts, with a minimum 3.0 undergraduate GPA
- Applicants with completed graduate course work should submit graduate transcripts with a minimum 3.25 GPA. Applicants with master's degrees in Health Service Psychology areas could be eligible for advanced placement (see below)
- The most competitive undergraduate juniors in psychology or psychology-related fields may apply for early admission to the Ph.D. program through the SFA Overlap Program <https://www.sfasu.edu/academics/orgs/graduate-admissions>
- Three letters of recommendation from academic faculty and/or work supervisors who can evaluate the applicant's qualifications for graduate study
- A statement of interest in the program, including a description of how the program fits with the applicant's long-term career goals
- Current resume or curriculum vitae
- Completion of a livestream interview with the program faculty
- Submission of a "live" written sample
- Applicants are not required to submit Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) results as part of the admissions packet

### Admission Decisions

Admission decisions are based on full faculty review of applications, size of incoming cohort, and consideration of the collective body of application materials. Applications are due **March 1st** of each year. Applicant interviews will occur at the end of March. Graduate Teaching and Research Assistant (GTA/GRA) applications also will be considered at this time.

*It is anticipated that the program will accept 8-12 new students per year, with emphasis on attracting a highly qualified student population.*

### Advanced Placement

A select number of students may qualify for advanced placement, which requires students to complete 72 semester hours, including the full-time academic year internship (see below).

To qualify for this track, students must:

- Hold a master's degree in School, Clinical, or Counseling Psychology from a regionally accredited institution

- Grades of B or better on ALL graduate-level courses:
  - Introduction to a health service psychology area (i.e., School, Clinical or Counseling Psychology)-3 credit hours
  - Abnormal Psychology or Psychopathology- 3 credit hours
  - Assessment- 6 credit hours
  - Ethical and legal standards- 3 credit hours
  - Individual and cultural diversity- 3 credit hours
  - Intervention (e.g. therapy, counseling, ABA, etc.)- 6 credit hours
  - Supervised practica/internship (at least 300 hours)

*To be considered for advanced placement within the doctoral program, courses must meet all of the following criteria:*

1. *The course must have been completed at a regionally accredited institution.*
2. *The course must be classified and transcribed as graduate-level coursework.*
3. *The course must have been completed within ten (10) years prior to the student's matriculation into the doctoral program.*
4. *A grade of B or better must have been earned in the course.*
5. *The course must clearly meet the content requirements for either a Discipline-Specific Knowledge (DSK) area or a Profession-Wide Competency (PWC) as delineated in the program's curriculum. A current syllabus must be provided and will be reviewed by program faculty with expertise in the relevant content area.*
6. *The course must have been delivered in person or in a blended/hybrid format. Fully online courses are not eligible for advanced placement consideration.*

## **Non-Discrimination Policy**

*Following the guidelines of APA, the program's faculty members take steps to ensure that all qualified students are welcome within the program, regardless of their backgrounds. Thus, program faculty seek to create a learning environment where individuals of all backgrounds have the opportunity to learn and make contributions to the profession of psychology. Consistent with such efforts, the program faculty act to ensure a supportive and encouraging learning environment appropriate for the training of individuals and the provision of training opportunities for all individuals in the program. Further, the program faculty avoids any actions that would restrict program access on grounds that are irrelevant to success in graduate training. The program implements a thoughtful and coherent plan to provide students with relevant knowledge and experiences about the role of cultural and individual diversity in psychological phenomena as they relate to the science and practice of professional psychology.*

## **Students' Rights and Responsibilities**

### **Students' Rights**

Students in the program have the right to receive high-quality education, access to necessary resources, and fair and impartial treatment from faculty and staff. They are entitled to clear communication regarding program requirements, expectations, and any evaluations of their performance. Additionally, students have the right to voice concerns and appeal decisions that

affect their academic standing or progress in the program. Privacy and confidentiality regarding their academic records and personal information are also fundamental rights.

## Responsibilities

Students are expected to demonstrate a high level of academic integrity, engage actively in their coursework and research, and adhere to ethical standards in all academic and professional activities. Regular and productive communication with program faculty members is essential to ensure timely progress and address any issues that may arise. Students must also respect the rights and contributions of their peers and contribute to a positive and collaborative academic environment. Meeting all deadlines, fulfilling program requirements, and participating in professional development opportunities are critical components of their responsibilities.

## Program Expectations

### Continuous Progress

The Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program expects all students to make continuous progress towards their degrees. A program is only considered “complete” after the appropriate documentation for degree completion has been filed with the the Graduate School.

### Professional Development

The program integrates rigorous academic coursework with practical and research experiences, enabling students to develop a strong foundation in theoretical knowledge, empirical skills and in the practice of psychology. The program faculty members are committed to providing personalized guidance to foster the student’s development of professional competencies, including critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and effective communication. We accomplish this by organizing bi-weekly workshops or seminars with invited guest speakers to expose students to the latest advancements in the field and to facilitate networking with professionals and peers. The program also emphasizes the importance of teaching experience, offering opportunities for students to lead undergraduate courses. Additionally, students are encouraged to engage in community outreach and professional organizations, further broadening their experience and preparing them for diverse career paths in academia, research, and applied settings.

### Grade Standards and Quality Points

Grades of A and B will allow students to receive graduate credit representing 4, and 3, quality points, respectively. *If a student receives a C or lower in any class, they will be dismissed from the program.* Moreover, a GPA of 3.25 must be maintained at all times. A student whose cumulative grade point average is less than this will be placed on academic probation. In the next semester or summer term in attendance, the student must achieve a cumulative 3.25 average. If the cumulative 3.25 is not met, the student is ineligible to continue graduate studies at SFA for one year and must officially reapply to the program in order to complete the degree after the suspension period.

**Withheld:** A grade of Withheld is given to the student who shows good cause for not completing the work by the end of the semester. The grade of Withheld is appropriate only when, because of unavoidable circumstances, a student cannot complete all of the coursework by the end of the semester/term. Examples of unavoidable circumstances include documented illness which prevents a student from attending classes, death in the immediate family, military service, or other emergencies deemed appropriate by the instructor. A grade of Withheld should not be requested nor given for lack of completion of work because of procrastination or dissatisfaction with the grade earned.

A student who is entitled to receive a grade of Withheld must develop a written contract with the instructor of the course to remove the grade of Withheld. The contract, signed by both instructor and student, must be filed with the program secretary and Office of the Department Chair. The instructor and student shall maintain copies for future reference. The instructor will also specify that, if the work is not completed by the designated time, a grade of F will replace the Withheld on the student's transcript. If the student completes the required work by the assigned completion date, the instructor will submit the new grade to the Office of the Registrar. In most instances, work to be completed should be finished within the first several weeks following the end of the semester/term. The maximum time allowed to finish the course work is one calendar year, after which time the grade of Withheld automatically becomes an F.

### Time Limitations

All requirements toward a doctoral degree must be completed within a period of 10 consecutive calendar years from the date that doctoral credit is first earned. This should be considered when transferring in courses completed prior to registration in the doctoral program. Although the time limit for completing the doctoral degree is 10 years, the Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program strongly encourages full-time students to complete their doctoral program within 5 years of their acceptance into the program.

## Advising and Deviations from Plans or Requirements

### Advising

Each student is assigned an academic advisor from the department upon admission to the Ph.D. program. The advisor is available to support the student in a variety of ways, including program planning and scheduling, corrective intervention, and career exploration.

### Shifts in Course Schedules

Program shifts in course schedules will only occur in cases of unanticipated, significant attrition within cohorts. Changes in any degree plan due to a student's change in enrollment status or the program's required adjustment because of cohort enrollment will result in the development of new individual student plans and distribution. When the program is required to make a course schedule shift, an announcement will be made to all students.

### Independent Study

Independent study occurs in rare situations and requires approval of the faculty member,

program director, and department chair.

### Deviations from the Official Course Sequence

Any student-requested deviation from the official course sequence and/or degree plan must be approved by the School and Health Service Psychology Program Faculty (SPPF) in writing. Students should first bring proposed changes to their advisor, who will then bring the proposal to the SPPF for a final decision. Changes made without SPPF written approval will result in delays in program completion and a loss of good standing in the program. Loss of good standing could result in being placed on probation, delayed approval for practicum, internship, and dissertation, and/or dismissal from the program.

### Changing the Degree Plan and/or Program Requirements

Upon admission to the Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program, students will receive a degree plan and a copy of this handbook. These two documents describe the requirements for degree completion. Students who want to deviate from their degree plan or modify program requirements must submit a formal request to the program faculty. The program faculty will approve/modify/not approve changes to the degree plan or program requirements. Changes in the requirements will be noted in the student's file, and a degree plan change form will be submitted to the Dean's office.

## Student Support Opportunities and Resources

Financial support for graduate students may include financial aid, grants, loans, scholarships, and assistantships. Information regarding these opportunities can be found at the [SFA Financial Aid Office](#).

### Graduate Assistantship

The Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program provides 16 assistantships for qualified graduate students. Stipends vary according to assignment and educational level of the applicant. Graduate Assistantships in the Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program require assisting in research and/or teaching or assisting with undergraduate courses. Graduate Assistantships require 20 hours of work per week. A 20-hour assistantship carries a stipend of \$21,225 for a 9 month employment (Fall and Spring semesters). To be considered for a graduate assistantship, applicants must indicate when accepted into the program.

Graduate assistantship positions are competitive (e.g., there are typically more students than assistantship slots) and are not guaranteed with an offer of admission. Graduate assistantship positions are renewable for up to four years for regular placement students and three years for students coming into the advanced placement program, pending adequate performance/annual reviews and budgetary requirements. **The minimum course load for a graduate assistant is 6 semester hours.**

*A graduate student on scholastic probation may not hold a graduate assistantship. In general, a person may not have any employment in addition to the graduate assistantship. If a graduate assistant wants to maintain additional employment, a request must be made to and approved by the program faculty.*

## Professional Activities

**Student-to-student mentoring.** Each incoming doctoral student is assigned to an existing graduate assistant from the Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program for mentoring purposes during their first semester. The role of the mentor is to provide information regarding the program from a student's perspective. The specific arrangement and form of mentoring are determined by each pair of students.

**Professional conference attendance.** All faculty within the Department of Allied Health Studies encourage students to attend appropriate professional conferences and workshops. In this program, conferences and workshops sponsored by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), the Texas Association of School Psychologists (TASP), the Texas Psychological Association (TPA), and the American Psychological Association (APA) are most meaningful to students. Students will present research with faculty at these conferences, and there are plenty of opportunities for informal interaction with faculty at these times. Students are expected to document engagement in ongoing professional involvement (e.g., professional conference and workshop attendance, professional organization service and leadership) and scholarly activities (e.g., professional presentations, publications). Such documentation should be present in dossiers submitted annually for program faculty review and evaluation. Students are expected to maintain updated dossiers throughout enrollment. Students who participate in professional activities, such as attending or presenting papers at state or national conventions, are eligible to apply for travel funds through the Office of Research and Graduate Studies.

**Professional involvement.** Student membership in at least one professional state organization (e.g., TASP) and at least one national organization (e.g., NASP, APA) and professional liability insurance are required throughout enrollment. Beyond these minimum expectations, the following activities are products that meet the criteria for professional involvement to be included in dossiers for annual review.

1. Active participation in professional service leadership in a local, regional, state, and/or national professional organization (i.e., representative, student liaison, officer, conference development)
2. Active participation in service leadership in program-sponsored professional development activities
3. Active participation and service leadership in university graduate student organizations
4. Participation in log-approved Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities, which may include, but are not limited to opportunities offered in and outside the program
5. Participation in service leadership in program-related activities (i.e., Orientation, peer mentoring, admission interviews, faculty search interviews, student recruitment)

**Scholarly activities.** Prior to degree completion, all students are expected to have at least one professional conference presentation at the state, regional, or national level or publication in a refereed journal. Beyond this minimal requirement, the following are products that meet the criteria for this area in annual reviews:

1. Submission of a manuscript for publication in a professional journal, which may be completed with faculty or fellow students
2. Submission of a grant proposal for review
3. Presentation of a workshop for a professional community, agency or organization
4. Presentation of a scholarly paper or poster at a local non-program, state, regional or national/international professional conference; and
5. Author or co-author of a book chapter, journal article, encyclopedia entry, book review, or test review

**Doctoral student organization.** The School Psych Doctoral Association is an established organization dedicated to developing leadership skills and empowering doctoral students in the program. This organization accomplishes its goals by providing resources, support, and opportunities needed to help them excel academically, professionally, and ethically. With the help of a faculty sponsor, the organization contributes positively to the field of school psychology and the education of students in our local community.

**Other resources.** SFA offers a variety of services that help support students' health. These services include counseling services to provide mental health support, basic medical care, immunizations, and lab services through the Student Health Clinic, disability services such as academic accommodations and support for students with disabilities, student wellness programs and a veteran resource center.

SFA offers free tutoring in various subjects through the Academic Assistance and Resource Center, which also hosts a variety of career fairs, employer networking, and job placement services. SFA also offers research support and access to digital and physical resources, study spaces and computer labs through the Ralph W. Steen Library. Additionally, the institution offers testing services for a variety of exams, including the PRAXIS exam.

SFA also supports social and community engagement through student organizations and campus events. The Lumberjack food pantry assists students who have difficulties accessing food and food-related services and the international student office provides support for international students, including immigration services, academic support, and intercultural interactions.

SFA offers financial support via the Financial Aid Office, which assists with FAFSA and other student loans, and the Scholarship Office, which helps students search for and apply for scholarships. In addition, student business services provide assistance to students in regard to tuition/fees payment, and other billing inquiries.

Finally, SFA's Student Rights and Responsibilities office and Title IX office help students understand university policies, handle grievances, and ensure access to a safe and inclusive environment.

## Student Performance Evaluation

**Formal reviews of student performance.** Student progress is reviewed on an ongoing basis. Review of student performance occurs on two levels. One level is the annual review, which includes all students in the program. The second level is the individual review, which occurs when a student-related problem is documented and filed by a faculty member, field supervisor, or other individuals affiliated with the training program.

**Annual review.** The annual review has two components: (a) the student portfolio submission and (b) a review of the student's overall performance conducted by the School and Health Service Psychology Program faculty.

Students document progress and performance in the program by establishing and maintaining a portfolio. Annual performance portfolio submissions are due every January via the a common classroom in D2L dropbox. Portfolio requirements include:

1. Cover letter
2. Updated Vitae
3. Inclusion of your unofficial transcript
4. Certificate of Insurance
5. Verification of attendance at professional conferences
6. Proof of professional membership(s)
7. Graduate Assistantship contracts/evaluations
8. Signed copy of practicum/internship hours
9. Research or service presentations/publications (to demonstrate knowledge and ability in psychological research, all students are required to be the first author or primary presenter at **one** state, regional, or national psychology conference). A poster or paper presentation is acceptable.
10. Evaluations of professional dispositions (if applicable)
11. Course evaluations (if applicable)
12. Professional training or certificates
13. Dissertation progress (if applicable)

The assessment of the annual portfolio follows this process:

1. A selected faculty member (reviewer) uses the attached rubric to evaluate the student's annual performance.
2. After completing the review, the reviewer presents the score and discusses the student's strengths and weaknesses with the entire faculty group.
3. The faculty members then vote to determine if: a) the student is in good standing, b) the student is in good standing but has missing documentation, or c) the student is not in good standing.
4. Following the meeting, feedback is communicated to the student via email by March 1st.

Evaluation: If the student is deemed to be in good standing but has missing documentation, they are allowed to gather and submit the necessary documents by April 1st. If the student is not in good standing, an individualized remediation plan is created. The remediation plan includes the following:

1. Meeting with the faculty reviewer to explain why items were not included/unacceptable.
2. Submission of items or plan on how items will be completed April 1<sup>st</sup> every year.
3. Students should complete the initial remediation plan to avoid a second remediation plan, which may include professional behavior/conduct training.
4. If the second remediation plan is not completed, an academic suspension due to non-compliance may result in an inability to register for classes, including internship and dissertation. At this point, continued registration in the program is contingent on demonstration of adequate progress as determined by faculty review. In addition, students receive regular feedback on their professional dispositions throughout each academic year.

*Annual Portfolio Rubric*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Exemplary (Full Points)</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>	<b>Not Submitted/ Incomplete</b>
<b>1. Cover Letter</b>	Clear, professional, reflective; summarizes accomplishments and goals; error-free.	Adequate summary of accomplishments and goals; few minor errors.	Minimal summary; vague goals; noticeable errors.	Missing or incomplete.
<b>2. Updated Vitae</b>	Complete, professional format; includes all relevant academic, clinical, and professional activities.	Complete, professional format with minor omissions.	Partial or outdated; missing key elements.	Missing or incomplete.
<b>3. Transcript</b>	Included, up-to-date, legible.	Included but outdated or unclear.	Poor quality or missing pages.	Missing.
<b>4. Certificate of Insurance</b>	Submitted, current, and correct.	Submitted but expired or with minor errors.	Submitted but unclear/incomplete.	Missing.
<b>5. Conference Attendance Verification</b>	Evidence of multiple conferences; reflects active professional engagement.	Evidence of at least one conference.	Evidence unclear or attendance minimal.	Missing.
<b>6. Proof of Memberships</b>	Documentation of multiple relevant memberships (APA, NASP, etc.).	Documentation of at least one membership.	Membership unclear or inactive.	Missing.
<b>7. Graduate Assistantship Contracts/Evaluations*</b>	All contracts and evaluations included; demonstrate strong performance.	All included but limited feedback provided.	Some missing or weak documentation.	Missing.

<b>8. Practicum/Internship Hours*</b>	Signed, complete, accurate documentation of hours.	Hours documented but with minor errors or missing signatures.	Incomplete or unclear documentation.	Missing.
<b>9. Research/Presentations/Publications*</b>	Evidence of first-author presentation/publication; reflects high scholarly engagement.	Evidence of participation in presentations/publications but not first-author.	Minimal evidence of scholarly engagement.	Missing.
<b>10. Professional Dispositions Evaluations*</b>	Included and demonstrates strong dispositions.	Included with generally positive evaluation.	Included with concerns noted.	Missing.
<b>11. Course Evaluations*</b>	Comprehensive set included, with evidence of reflective growth.	Some included; demonstrates adequate performance.	Limited or weak evidence of evaluations.	Missing.
<b>12. Professional Training/Certificates*</b>	Evidence of multiple trainings/certifications relevant to professional growth.	Evidence of at least one training/certificate.	Evidence unclear or minimal.	Missing.
<b>13. Dissertation Progress*</b>	Clear documentation of progress (proposal approved, data collection, chapters completed, etc.).	Documentation included with some progress.	Limited or unclear progress.	Missing.

\*If applicable

**Individual review.** An individual review may also occur when a faculty member and/or concerned party expresses a concern or complaint about the student in writing to the Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program director (Dr. Nina Harness), at which point the student's faculty advisor is informed. The concern may revolve around academic or behavioral issues, such as but not limited to:

- Inability or unwillingness to acquire and integrate professional standards into clinical practice
- Inability to acquire professional skills and reach an accepted level of competence expected of doctoral students
- Inability to manage personal behavior to the extent that it interferes with training or work with clients

The advisor, in conjunction with program faculty, makes one of three possible decisions:

- The problem is resolved and requires no formal action (state reasons).
- A Plan of Improvement, to which both parties agree, is developed and documented.
- The faculty advisor has ongoing serious concerns about the problem, or the problem cannot be remediated through a student Plan of Improvement, and the matter is forwarded to the Department Chair.

If this process is initiated, a letter will be sent to the student regarding the decision of the faculty. It is the responsibility of the faculty advisor to follow up and monitor the situation regardless of the specific decision.

## Retention and Dismissal

After students enroll in the Department and Graduate School, they may continue to register as long as they remain in good academic standing, make satisfactory academic progress, and are within the time limitations contained in the departmental handbook and the graduate catalog. Students are considered in good standing if they have a minimum GPA of 3.25, have no letter grades lower than a B, are making satisfactory progress toward completing degree requirements, and meet the minimum requirements. Note that failure to complete departmental requirements by the department's stated deadlines may also result in corrective action by the Graduate School.

Students must maintain appropriate professionalism in class and field settings; observe the fundamental rules of ethical conduct; and receive successful annual reviews conducted by program faculty throughout their graduate training experience. Consistent with University policy, the Department of Allied Health Studies reserves the right to refuse the privilege of further attendance to a student when it has become evident that the student lacks the personal qualities, professional characteristics, or scholastic attainments essential for success.

When necessary, faculty will work in collaboration with the student to develop a Plan of Improvement designed to improve the student's performance in the program. The faculty will provide specific goals and objectives to the student, as well as deadlines related to the Plan of Improvement. The plan could include, but is not limited to, the following options:

- additional clinical coursework and/or supervised experience
- reduction in the number of classes taken each semester
- change of amount, format, and/or content of supervision
- an individual Plan of Improvement.
- referral to SFA's Early Alert Program
- a leave of absence from the program

## Inactive Status

Students are expected to be enrolled each semester until completion of the degree. Failure to enroll each semester over the course of a school year without written approval by the Program Director and Department Chair for the absence will result in removal from the program. If the student wishes to return to the program, reapplication for admission is required.

## Leave of Absence

Students must register each semester unless they have been granted an approved leave of absence. Requests for a leave of absence should be made in writing to the Program Director. Requests must be made prior to the semester in which the leave will begin; the maximum length of leave that can be approved is one calendar year. Leaves of absence must also be approved by the Department Chair. Failure to register without a leave of absence will result in being dropped from the program.

## Due Process

To ensure fairness and transparency in addressing academic and behavioral concerns, decisions regarding termination follow a process that involves several steps.

1. **Initial Identification of Concern.** Concerns regarding a student's academic performance or behavior are identified by faculty, staff, or peers. These concerns are documented in writing and reviewed by the faculty body during the monthly program meetings.
2. **Informal Resolution Attempt.** The concerned faculty member or advisor meets with the student to discuss the issue and attempt an informal resolution. This may involve providing feedback, offering support resources, and setting expectations for improvement.
3. **Formal Notification** If the issue is not resolved informally, the student receives a formal written notification detailing the specific concerns, the evidence supporting these concerns, and the potential consequences if the issues are not addressed.
4. **Meeting with Faculty.** The student is invited to meet with the program faculty to discuss the concerns. In this meeting, the student has the opportunity to present their perspective, provide additional information, and suggest potential solutions.
5. **Development of a Remediation Plan.** If the committee determines that remediation is appropriate, a written remediation plan is developed. This plan outlines specific actions the student must take to address the concerns, a timeline for completion, and the criteria for evaluating success.
6. **Implementation and Monitoring.** The student implements the remediation plan. Progress is monitored regularly, with the student receiving ongoing feedback from the advisor or designated faculty member.
7. **Evaluation of Progress.** At the end of the remediation period, the student's progress is formally evaluated by the program faculty. The evaluation considers whether the student has met the criteria outlined in the remediation plan.
8. **Outcome Decision.** Based on the evaluation, the program faculty decides whether the student has successfully addressed the concerns. Possible outcomes include:
  - a. **Successful Completion:** The student is deemed to have met the criteria, and no further action is needed.
  - b. **Continued Remediation:** The student has made progress but has not fully met the criteria. The remediation plan is extended with revised expectations.
  - c. **Program Dismissal:** If the student has not made satisfactory progress, the committee may recommend dismissal from the program. The student receives written notification of this decision.
9. **Appeal Process.** The student has the right to appeal the decision. The appeal must be submitted in writing within a specified time frame (e.g., 30 days) and should outline the grounds for the appeal (below). The appeal will be reviewed by the department chair, associate dean, dean, and dean of graduate studies.
10. **Final Communication.** The final decision is communicated to the student in writing. If the appeal is successful, appropriate actions are taken to support the student's continuation in the program. If the appeal is denied, the decision is final, and the student is informed of any further steps they need to take.

## Grievance Procedures

Students who have a grievance with the program are encouraged to first discuss the issue with the person or people involved in an attempt to resolve the matter informally. If this approach is not successful, the student may file a formal grievance with the program director. The formal grievance process involves submitting a written complaint to the program director, outlining the nature of the grievance and any supporting documentation. The program director will have one month then investigate the complaint and may meet with the student and any other parties involved to gather additional information.

After the investigation is complete, the program director will make a decision regarding the grievance and communicate this decision in writing to the student. If the decision is not satisfactory to the student, they may appeal the decision to the chair of the department and the dean of the college to which they will receive a response within 3 weeks. The program is committed to resolving grievances in a timely and fair manner. Students are encouraged to follow the grievance process and to seek guidance and support from their faculty advisor or other members of the program as needed. Additionally, the program is committed to maintaining confidentiality throughout the grievance process, to the extent possible, to protect the privacy of the student and any other parties involved.

## Filing an Appeal or Academic Grievance

A student who wishes to appeal a grade, or who wishes to contest the course requirements, examinations, course content, admission to a program, instructor behavior, or similar issue, must first make informal attempts to resolve the issue at hand. Information designed to help navigate the situation and ensure concerns are addressed can be found on the SFASU institutional compliance (<https://www.sfasu.edu/compliance/institutional-complaints>)

## Practicum Requirements

The practicum sequence in the program is designed to complement the program's scientist-practitioner model, offering a scaffolded approach to professional development through increasing levels of exposure and responsibility. This sequence includes pre-practicum, practicum, and internship experiences, providing students with opportunities to develop foundational skills, gain supervised experience, and build entry-level expertise in psychological service delivery across multiple settings. Practicum experiences focus on assessment, academic and behavioral intervention, counseling, home-school collaboration, and consultation.

### Practicum Requirements

#### *Pre-Practicum (hours do not count for practicum requirements)*

The practicum sequence begins in the first year with a pre-practicum experience embedded within the *SPSY 6342 Intro to School and Health Service Psychology* course. Pre-practicum activities are limited to shadowing, which consists primarily of observation. The intent is to provide broad exposure to professionals, procedures, settings, and populations, laying the groundwork for future practica and professional opportunities. While these shadowing hours do not count toward formal practicum requirements, they offer valuable opportunities to build foundational skills and establish professional connections. Additional shadowing opportunities may be available throughout the program, depending on student placements and site availability.

#### *Practicum*

The formal practicum experience begins in the third and fourth years of the program with enrollment in *SPSY 6353 Practicum* courses. Students complete two to three integrated practicum courses (*SPSY 6353*) depending on their placement. The integrated practicum course required for both regular admission and advanced placement doctoral students requires the student to accumulate **a minimum of 600 hours although most students complete much more**. Practicum experiences will be based on the experience and background of the student, as well as the needs of the site. It is required that students with no prior school experience complete 80% of their hours in a school-based practicum. Students with previous school-based supervised training are encouraged to complete outside-school experiences, which typically occur in a clinical setting.

Throughout their practicum experiences, students will progress developmentally from observation to assisting with services, and ultimately to the direct delivery of services under supervision. Upon successful completion of their practicum experiences, students are prepared for the internship.

*Note: Students should refer to themselves as a "Practicum Student" in all meetings with practicum agency personnel and clients and indicate this title on all reports and written correspondence. They must also indicate that they are working under supervision.*

## Supervision and Evaluation

Each practicum student is supervised by both field-based and university-based supervisors who are appropriately licensed and credentialed. Students participate in weekly group supervision and have individual weekly meetings with their university supervisor. They are required to:

- Develop and submit goals and objectives for their practicum experience
- Maintain weekly and cumulative logs documenting their activities
- Participate in ongoing evaluation by the university supervisor

The university supervisor maintains regular contact with the field site throughout the semester, including site visits, to assess the student's progress and professionalism. A written evaluation is completed twice per semester and used collaboratively by the university and field supervisors to support the student's development and strengthen the partnership between the University and practicum sites.

Field supervisors maintain full professional responsibility for all clinical services provided by practicum students. While practicum students may participate in service delivery appropriate to their level of training, all clinical activities are conducted under the supervision and authority of the appropriately accredited field supervisor.

### **Telesupervision**

Practicum sites are well established throughout the greater East Texas region, and many students commute significant distances to the university. Given the rural context and associated travel demands, telesupervision is a necessary component of the training model at SFA.

Telesupervision expands access to diverse schools and clinical settings across geographic areas, aligning with the program's aim of preparing psychologists who are knowledgeable, skilled, and equipped to deliver evidence-based clinical services effectively across service contexts.

Telesupervision also supports continuity of supervision, ongoing consultation, and consistent access to university supervisors. With the increasing integration of telehealth and telesupervision within professional psychology and broader mental health practice, exposure to videoconferencing modalities during training is essential. Providing structured experience in telesupervision ensures that trainees develop competencies relevant to contemporary service delivery models.

Telesupervision is implemented within the context of established supervisory relationships. University supervisors maintain both onsite and remote presence, and supervisees engage in regular in-person and virtual interactions. Supervisory relationships are intentionally developed at the onset of the practicum sequence to ensure trust, accountability, and effective oversight.

For practicum students, telesupervision may account for up to 100% of required individual and group supervision hours. Students are provided with clear procedures for accessing supervisors for consultation, crisis coverage, and assessment-related support. All practicum students receive both office and personal contact information for supervisors to ensure accessibility. Eligibility for telesupervision is contingent upon students demonstrating adequate academic, clinical, and professional performance within the program.

All telesupervision activities are conducted using secure, HIPPA-compliant and FERPA-compliant video conferencing platforms approved by the university. All School and Health Service Psychology Faculty are Zoom account holders which have been set up with additional supports to ensure confidentiality. This platform ensures real time, interactive audio and video communication. Both supervisors and practicum students are responsible for maintaining a professional environment during session, including: providing a private, distraction free location, using secure internet connections, and ensuring no other individuals can overhear or access confidential information.

### **Agreements and Documentation**

An Affiliation Agreement must be in place for all participating practicum sites and must be updated every five years. In addition, a Field Supervision Practicum Agreement is completed for each student prior to the start of their practicum. These agreements ensure that all supervision and training activities meet program and accreditation standards. Students will keep detailed and thorough records of their time spent at practicum sites. Typically, students use Time2Track to keep accurate and detailed logs of accumulated hours.

Students must obtain student professional practice liability insurance before they begin practicum. This liability insurance must be maintained while enrolled in the practicum courses. Proof of liability insurance must be provided to the university supervisor. Be aware that some sites may require a criminal background check. Should students have any concerns, they are encouraged to consult with the program director as soon as possible.

## Doctoral Internship Training

### Eligibility

Eligible students must:

- Be enrolled in the SFA Ph.D. in School and Health Service Psychology program,
- Completed all courses, except dissertation.
- Have completed all supervised practica
- Be in good standing with the program
- Successfully passed their doctoral comprehensive exam
- Have proposed their dissertation (it is highly recommended that students also defend their dissertation prior to beginning their doctoral internship training).

### Doctoral Internship Training Program Options

The doctoral internship is an organized program consisting of properly administered, systematically coordinated, planned, structured, and sequenced training experiences that extend beyond practicum training in depth, breadth, duration, frequency and intensity of experiences. The primary training method is experiential, including modeling, vicarious/observational learning, and supervisory or consultative guidance. At all times, interns and supervisors adhere to the ethical principles of APA and/or NASP. Specific responsibilities for the internship agency, intern, and university are outlined in the SPSY 6154 Memorandum of Agreement.

In general, students have two options for completing their doctoral internship training experience. Any option that a student chooses must be approved by the School and Health Service Psychology program faculty in order to ensure appropriateness of the placement, activities, and field supervision. The doctoral internship training requirements outlined below are a minimum standard. They do not necessarily lead to licensure as a psychologist. Licensure as a psychologist means that an individual may practice psychology independently. The requirements for licensure as a psychologist typically require specific training beyond earning a Ph.D. and vary from state to state. Students that wish to become licensed psychologists should research the requirements for internship training in the jurisdiction in which they wish to become licensed and ensure that their doctoral internship training program meets those standards. It is the responsibility of the student to maintain all documentation and secure experiences necessary to become licensed in the jurisdiction in which they seek licensure.

#### **Option 1 – Accredited Internship Training Program**

When choosing this option, the student applies for and is accepted into a doctoral internship training program accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA) or the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA). Although there are some APA accredited internships in the state of Texas, this option may require relocation to another state for one year. Applications for accredited internships may be due as early as October during the fall semester prior to beginning internship. Doctoral graduate students in School and Health Service Psychology who pursue an accredited internship will typically meet state psychology board requirements for licensure as a psychologist; however, it is not guaranteed.

#### **Option 2 – Internship Training Program**

This option is open to students who apply for and are admitted into internship training programs that are not accredited by APA or CPA, but are designed to meet a synthesis of requirements for doctoral internship training programs outlined by NASP, APA, The Council for Directors of School and Health Service Psychology Programs (CDSPP), and the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (TSBEP). The requirements for this type of training program are outlined in the Affiliation Agreement. Internship programs meeting these requirements must employ two or more interns and two or more licensed psychologists at their agency. Also, the training program must be sequenced and structured in nature with clear training goals and experiences. If the internship training program is completed in a school and a separate licensure/certification is required to practice psychology in a school setting in the jurisdiction in which the internship agency is located, the supervising psychologist must also have this license/certification. This option is designed to meet licensure requirements in the state of Texas; however, there is no guarantee that this experience will lead to licensure as a psychologist.

### Required Hours and Settings

If the internship program takes place in a school setting, interns must log a total of 1,750 hours with at least 25% of those hours spent in direct services. If the internship program takes place in a mental health setting, a total of 2,000 hours with at least 25% of those hours spent in direct services is required. Students completing an internship in a mental health setting are encouraged to complete hours in a school placement that allows for a minimum of 600 hours. Completing those hours will make them eligible to the LSP licensure in Texas.

### Obtaining Doctoral Internship Training

Academic training programs and internship training programs are two separate training experiences in health service psychology. The internship training experience typically occurs in a different agency and/or institution than academic training. Academic training programs are not required to provide internship training programs. Internships are not guaranteed under Options 1 and 2 for all students; therefore, it is the student's responsibility to apply for and build relationships with possible internship agencies. Also, a willingness to relocate during the internship year is highly encouraged.

### Responsibilities

In general, the responsibility for the effectiveness of the internship is shared equally by the intern, the school or agency supervisor and internship program, and the university-based supervisor. If a problem is identified it should be brought to the attention of the other parties as soon as possible. Examples of problems which might interfere with the effectiveness of the internship are inappropriate experiences for the intern, misunderstanding the requirements of the internship, personality conflicts, inappropriate or unprofessional behavior on the part of the intern, or other issues. If a problem is determined by the intern or school/agency supervisor, it is particularly important that the university-based supervisor be contacted immediately. Such problems should not be ignored until the end of the semester. The SFA university-based supervisor will work with the intern and the supervisor to find a solution to the problem. If no solution can be found, the internship would be terminated before the end of the semester.

**The intern.** The intern is responsible for discharging their assigned duties in a professional

manner and for responding to supervision appropriately. The intern shall follow all rules and regulations of the sponsoring school or agency comparable to that of any other employee. This includes such matters as working hours, time off, vacations, and manner of dress.

**The school or agency supervisor.** The intern supervisor must have a minimum of three (3) years of credentialed experience as a school psychologist or psychologist and be employed as a regular employee or consultant with the school district or agency. The school or agency supervisor helps determine the most appropriate experiences for the intern, assigns duties to the intern, and provides on-going supervision of the intern's work, either directly or through other staff personnel. It is especially important for the school or agency supervisor to notify the SFA internship coordinator if a problem develops during the internship which does not seem amenable to solution within the school or agency. At the end of each semester and at the end of the internship, the supervisor will be asked to submit a written evaluation of the intern's work, and to help the SFA internship coordinator determine a grade for the intern.

**The SFA university-based supervisor.** The university-based supervisor helps place the intern, determines the experiences of the intern, and works with the intern and the school or agency supervisor as necessary to work out details and training experiences of the internship. The coordinator contacts the supervisor periodically to monitor the progress of the intern and to be apprised of any problems.

## Doctoral Dissertation Requirements and Procedures

### Doctoral Dissertation Committee

Ph.D. candidates must write a dissertation based upon research that makes an original contribution to the literature. Before beginning the dissertation process, the student should obtain and become familiar with the Dissertation Guide, which is applicable to all doctoral dissertations. This guide is located on the SFA Graduate School website (See <https://www.sfasu.edu/academics/orgs/graduate-students-faculty/dissertations-exhibitions-theses> ).

The SFA School and Health Service Psychology Ph.D. program requires a dissertation committee that consists of four members. At least two members should be faculty within the School and Health Service Psychology program, and at least one graduate faculty member or qualified doctoral level professional from outside the program.

The required courses related to dissertation are: SPSY 6138 Dissertation – taken for a total of nine (9) hours. As per Graduate School policy, if the student is unable to complete the dissertation by the time these 9 hours have been completed, the student must continuously enroll in a minimum of one credit of SPSY 6138 every fall, spring, and summer until the dissertation is defended and approved. At a minimum, the student will meet with the dissertation committee two times; once for the proposal defense and once for the final dissertation defense. The student's committee may request additional meetings if necessary. Students may not propose their dissertation and defend their dissertation within the same semester. Students should not expect to be able to propose or defend their dissertations during the summer semester or during semester breaks. Faculty may or may not be on contract during the summer semester, and so may not be available for a dissertation proposal or defense during that time period. Students must plan carefully, so as to be able to propose the dissertation, and defend the dissertation, within the academic year (e.g., fall or spring semesters) and within the parameters set by the graduate school.

Students are encouraged to complete their dissertation during their last year of coursework prior to internship. Completion of the dissertation prior to internship benefits the student during their internship experience and ensures graduation upon completion of the internship experience. At a minimum, the dissertation proposal should be completed before the student leaves for internship. Having the dissertation proposal approved prior to internship facilitates timely degree completion. Dissertations are graded as a Pass (P) or Fail (F) scale. Students will be given a grade of Pass (P) on the 9 credits required for SPSY 6138 after they successfully complete their proposal (6 credit hours) and defend (3 credit hours). The grade of WH will be assigned to indicate progress on the project. The grade of F will be assigned to students that do not make any progress during the enrolled semester and subsequently be dismissed from the program.

### The Dissertation Process

The following information is provided as a guide to help students initiate and sustain a successful dissertation process. The most conscientious students will begin the process the second year of enrollment by seeking faculty-guided engagement in critical review of bodies of literature that address their social issue areas and populations of greatest interest. Each opportunity for paper

development might be used to further shape and hone research questions that could be considered in pilot studies and the future dissertation. Variation in the details below may occur as a function of the dissertation topic itself, the student, the dissertation chair and committee, and other aspects of the process. Students are responsible for initiating all the major steps of this process.

#### **a) Preparing the dissertation proposal**

Before registering for dissertation credit, the student should choose a dissertation chair. The dissertation chair should be a School and Health Service Psychology faculty member (or the dissertation needs to be co-chaired and one of the co-chairs must be a School and Health Service Psychology faculty member). The dissertation topic must be approved by the student's doctoral committee chair prior to proceeding with the proposal process. Once an idea has been generated, the student should write several research questions that address the selected topic. The dissertation chair will assist the student in formulating researchable questions. In conjunction with the chosen chair, the student will then select the dissertation committee and gain permission of each faculty member chosen to serve on the committee. Note that all departmental committee members must be members of the graduate faculty, which requires approval by the departmental and university committees. Students are to verify this status as invitations are extended for committee membership.

The dissertation proposal should provide information on the need/rationale and overview of the study (Chapter One), review relevant literature (Chapter Two), and describe research methodology for addressing the questions (Chapter Three). Students should work with their doctoral committee chairperson and committee members as needed in order to refine the proposal and schedule the proposal meeting. The student should allow the dissertation chair(s) and committee members at least a two-week period for returning drafts during regular semesters. When the dissertation chair has approved the proposal manuscript, the student should work with the committee chair and other members to schedule a date for a proposal meeting. The student is responsible for (A) working with the department administrative assistant or secretary to secure a room for the meeting, (B) notifying committee members of proposal date and time, (C) providing all committee members with a copy of the proposal, and (D) collecting and bringing multiple copies of the appropriate forms to the meeting for faculty signatures.

The proposal manuscript must be given to committee members at least three weeks in advance of the scheduled proposal meeting to provide time for committee members to prepare for the meeting or to raise major questions that should be addressed prior to the meeting. The student is also responsible for securing the necessary approvals and sanctions related to the dissertation study from the agencies and settings where the research will be implemented prior to the proposal meeting.

At the meeting itself, the student will be asked to provide an overview of the dissertation proposal in a PowerPoint presentation and to address related questions from committee members. The meeting is designed to clarify dissertation plans and procedures as deemed necessary by the student and committee members. At the conclusion of the meeting,

committee members vote on the proposal and share the decision with the student. Upon successful completion of the proposal meeting and approval by the SFA Institutional Review Board (IRB), students may proceed with their dissertation research. Students are responsible for all arrangements and details associated with conducting the dissertation study including (but not limited to) securing the necessary research settings(s), subjects, observers, data collectors, and other related details. This includes any financial costs incurred in order to carry out the dissertation and approval process.

#### **b) Preparing the dissertation defense**

Upon completing the entire study, analyzing the data, and preparing a final copy of the dissertation in accordance with the university's Dissertation Guide, students should schedule the dissertation defense meeting. For this, the student should work with the committee chair and other members to determine an agreed upon date for the defense meeting. If necessary, changes in committee membership may be made by the student or the faculty or the committee. The request is submitted to the committee chair, and the change would be reflected on the School and Health Service Psychology Doctoral Dissertation Committee form.

The student **must** notify the the program director at least 20 days prior to the proposed dissertation defense date. The student must then complete the routing form to notify the following people regarding date and time of defense: Department Chair, College Dean, and Graduate Dean. It is not unusual for the announcement to be publicized in the university newspaper and members of the student body may be encouraged to attend. It is the student's responsibility to reserve a room with appropriate technology to support the defense presentation. Once a location for the meeting has been secured, the student will email committee members with the date and time.

The Ph.D. candidate will give a formal 30-40 minute presentation (overview of study, summary of results, discussion, and implications). The dissertation committee may question the candidate during or after the presentation; however, in the most structured process questions are reserved until after the completion of the PowerPoint presentation. Following the formal presentation, at the discretion of the committee, questions can be solicited from the non-committee attendees for up to 20 minutes followed by a break. Following the question and answer period, the candidate and all non-committee members will be asked to leave the room so that the committee may discuss the candidate's performance in private. During deliberations, which usually take no longer than 30 minutes, committee members will vote to "approve," "approve with conditions," or "not approve" the defense. The candidate is then asked to return to the room to receive the committee's final decision.

#### **c) After the dissertation defense**

Once the dissertation has been defended, the student works with the chairperson to make any committee-recommended changes to the dissertation document. Committee members reserve the right to review and approve the final revised manuscript. The final manuscript is the document signed by the dissertation committee and the dean of Graduate Studies and is subsequently bound, placed in the library and uploaded to ScholarWorks.

Therefore, the manuscript must be of the highest possible quality with respect to content and presentation. The student bears the primary responsibility for quality but must realize that each member of the dissertation committee also bears responsibility and is not obligated to sign the manuscript until satisfied with the overall quality of the dissertation.

## *Dissertation Defense Expectations:*

### **I. Presentation Content**

1. Clarity of Research Question(s)  
Clearly stated and well-defined research questions or hypotheses.
2. Literature Review  
Comprehensive and relevant review of existing literature.
3. Research Design and Methodology  
Sound and appropriate research design and methodology.

### **II. Presentation Delivery**

4. Organization and Structure  
Logical flow and well-organized structure of the presentation.
5. Verbal Communication  
Clear articulation, appropriate pace, and effective use of language.
6. Visual Aids  
Effective use of slides or other visual aids to enhance understanding.

### **III. Defense and Engagement**

7. Responses to Questions  
Thoughtful and articulate responses to committee questions.
8. Engagement with Committee  
Active participation and responsiveness during the defense.
9. Handling Challenges  
Ability to address and navigate challenges or critiques.

### **IV. Research Contribution and Significance**

10. Originality and Innovation  
Demonstration of original thinking or innovative approaches.
11. Contribution to the Field  
Clear articulation of how the research contributes to the existing body of knowledge.

### **V. Professionalism**

12. Professional Demeanor  
Professional behavior, demeanor, and respect for committee members.
13. Time Management  
Effective use of the allocated time for the defense.