

Psychology PhD Program structure

The PhD programme trains the next generation of rigorous, confident, responsible, and competent scholars who will address important problems, problems where the answer matters to science in particular, or to humanity in general (Medawar, 1979, *Advice to a Young Scientist*).

Accepted students are expected to commit full-time to their PhD studies. They are not allowed to take on paid jobs outside their studies, unless it can be demonstrated that these jobs contribute to their research. They are expected to spend no less than 40 hours a week, for 51 weeks annually. Candidates should know that it is not uncommon to spend 70 hours a week working towards their degree.

General Structure of the PhD Program: Duration of the program is 5 years (125 Credits) and 4 years (100 Credits) for M.Phil / M. Tech entrants. The PhD program will include academic and research training as well as ethical and career development training. The first two years (one year, in case of M.Phil/M.Tech entrants) will be heavily tilted to coursework and professional development and career planning workshops. From third year onwards, gradually the research components will start to predominate, and years 4 and 5 will be more or less research centric. Three activities will be mandatory for all PhD students through their tenure at the Department of Psychology at Ashoka University.

- 1. Psychology Journal Club:** Every week a student will present a journal article. Attendance is mandatory for all PhD students. Senior students will present in the earlier part of the academic year for the newer entrants to learn from their peers
- 2. Graduate research seminar in Psychology:** Every week two students will present their own research in front of the department. Attendance is mandatory for all PhD students and all faculty members are encouraged to attend the weekly GRS
- 3. Teaching assistantships:** Each student will serve as graduate TAs in a course in consultation with the thesis advisor every semester starting from the beginning of second year. The particular arrangements will be worked out by the advisor and the department on a case by case basis.

- 4. Individual Development Plan (IDP):** Every year, starting from the first year, students will submit an individual development plan to the PhD coordinator and the advisor by **October 1 of every academic year.** This will serve as a roadmap to the upcoming year for the student, and will be reviewed as part of their annual progress review. Further resources on how to think about an IDP is available online and some guidelines are provided below. The students will receive more guidance on this as they enroll in the program

Duration of the PhD program: For candidates with M.Phil or M. Tech, the duration of the PhD Fellowship is 4 years. For every other entrant, the duration of the PhD fellowship is 5 years. The PhD curriculum has been developed within this framework.

Tentative guidelines are provided below for structuring each year of the PhD Program

Between selection and enrollment

- After the students have been selected for admission, they will actively correspond with the potential thesis advisors and finalize this by a process of mutual agreement. This should be completed as soon as possible but no later than July 1, 2019 for a September 2019 admission.
- Familiarize yourself with the proposed project(s) you will be working on for the first two years of your PhD. One of these could potentially become your dissertation project.
- Using the time between selection and enrollment, the prospective student is encouraged to think and formulate a plan for their tenure at Ashoka University. Sample but not exhaustive pointers to think about could be
 - What are your strengths? (academically, and non-academically) How will these strengths become complementary to your advisor's expertise for the project(s) discussed? How well do you fit in to the research group?
 - What are your weaknesses? (Academically and non-academically). How can you improve yourself in these areas using the resources and the PhD experience at Ashoka University?
 - How well do you understand ethical issues for responsible conduct of research and academic integrity? If there are gaps, which areas do you need to address first?
 - What are your short term and long term goals? How can the PhD Program at Ashoka University help you attain those?

- What parallel skills can the program give you in addition to theoretical and technical expertise directly related to your PhD program?

All these will be essential in writing your Individual Development Plan (IDP) at the very beginning of year 1 and every subsequent years. This is a program requirement and cannot be waived for any student.

Year 1 (25 credits)

1. Deadline to declare primary advisor (s) : **September 15**
2. **Monsoon Semester:**
 - a. One Core Course (4 Credits), One elective course (4 credits) or 2 Core Courses (4+4=8 credits) or 2 electives (4+4=8 credits)
 - b. Psychology Journal Club= 1 Credit
 - c. Graduate Research Seminar = 1 Credit
 - d. Research activities- 2 or 3 Credits

Spring Semester:

- a. One Core Course (4 Credits), One elective course (4 credits) or 2 Core Courses (4+4=8 credits) or 2 electives (4+4=8 credits)
- b. Psychology Journal Club= 1 Credit
- c. Graduate Research Seminar = 1 Credit
- d. Research activities- 2 or 3 Credits

Based on the student's background, the advisor and the student will determine a set of courses (core or elective) the student needs to take during years 1 and 2, and possibly additional courses in latter years if these courses are relevant. The availability of courses, the nature of the proposed PhD project, and the prior training of the student will all decide the exact nature of the courses the student will pursue.

3. Student training will involve statistical training, data analysis, research design, scientific writing, citations, presentation, management and dissemination of data (including issues concerning data privacy, data protection, data ownership, and intellectual property rights), and programming. These are mandatory.

4. All students will take coursework on ethical practices in social science and behavioral research. Unless a centralized ethics course is created, thesis advisor will take this responsibility to train students on matters of ethics.
5. Through years 1 and 2 students will also gather preliminary data in order to write their thesis proposal documents.
6. Students will submit an individualised development plan (IDP) by **October 1 to the advisor and the PhD Coordinator**. At the annual review, the IDP will be followed up on. For details on how to write an IDP students will receive guidance once admitted

7. Annual review will be conducted with collaboration with the mentor and submitted to the graduate coordinator no later than **May 28, 2019**.

Year 2 (25 Credits) – [Please note: This is the Year 1 for M.Phil. / M.Tech. entrants]

8. Monsoon Semester:

- a. One Core/ elective/ methodology Course (4 Credits)
- b. Psychology Journal Club= 1 Credit
- c. Graduate Research Seminar = 1 Credit
- d. Teaching assistantship- 1 credit
- e. Research activities- 1 or 2 Credits
- f. Mandatory workshops (1X4= 4 credits)
 - i. Research ethics and academic integrity
 - ii. Laboratory safety and occupational hazards / Field ethical issues
 - iii. Reading for your literature review. Primary Literature searching using databases, collating search, creating a bibliography and maintaining, updating citations
 - iv. Handling and collection of Data-I (Proper record keeping, data privacy, data protection, data ownership, and intellectual property rights)

Spring Semester:

- e. One Core/ elective/methodology Course (4 Credits)
- f. Psychology Journal Club= 1 Credit
- g. Graduate Research Seminar = 1 Credit
- h. Teaching assistantship- 1 Credit
- i. Research activities- 1 or 2 Credits
- j. Mandatory Workshops (1X 4= 4 Credits)

- i. Programming - I
- ii. Handling and collection of data- II (Statistics)
- iii. Scientific Writing (Writing a research review)
- iv. Scientific Communication (Good presentation skills, effective ways to deliver concepts, speaking to a lay audience versus an expert audience)

9. **The Psychology PhD qualifying exam:**

The purpose of the qualifying exam is to judge whether the student has enough theoretical knowledge and grasp of primary literature in his/her field of research, and is adequately poised to launch a dissertation project. This examination will be on a descriptive format and

will be spread over both semesters of the second year. The monsoon semester will be devoted primarily to reading and understanding the literature and identifying pertinent research questions and the spring to articulately summarizing current research and writing them in the form of a series of mini reviews.

- a. **By September 30th** of academic year 2, PhD students will identify a three to four member committee consisting of both internal and external faculty members. (Advisor is a part of the thesis committee). The names and details of the committee members should be forwarded to the PhD coordinator via email, using the prescribed format.
- b. At the beginning of the monsoon semester, the student will choose a topic of interest allied to the intended dissertation project. Submission deadline for chosen topic to the : **October 15th**
- c. Each student will conduct a comprehensive literature review on the selected topic and create a bibliography of not less than 75 references. Not more than 5-6 of these should be review articles. Rest should be primary literature. Based on the readings, the student will identify 4-5 existing research gaps in the literature, and write 4-5 questions.
- d. A final list of 4-5 questions should be submitted to the committee members by December 1, with the entire bibliography via email
- e. The committee can keep the questions submitted intact, modify them, add their own or completely change the questions.
- f. By **December 15** students will receive the final version of the questions back from the committee.

- g. The students will write the answers to the questions that the committee returned back to them. Each answer should be formatted like a minireview and organized in to subheaders, with a reference section of its own. The submission deadline is **March 31** (Spring semester, academic year 2).
 - h. The committee members will review the answers and return an answer via email through the student's advisor whether the student has passed the qualifying exam, will be graded a pass contingent on major or minor edits or has failed the qualifying exam.
 - i. Any student who has been graded a fail, or has been suggested edits, has till **May 1** to rewrite the answers.
10. If the student's progress is unsatisfactory by the end of their second year, or the student is unable to pass the qualifying examination, they will be asked to leave the programme. In exceptional cases (e.g., pregnancy), they may be granted an extended probation period of not more than 12 more months. Annual review must be submitted in the prescribed format to the PhD coordinator by **May 28**.

Year 3

11. Monsoon Semester:

- a. One advanced methodology/elective Course (4 Credits)
- b. Psychology Journal Club= 1 Credit
- c. Graduate Research Seminar = 1 Credit
- d. Teaching assistantship- 1 credit
- e. Research activities- 1 or 2 Credits
- f. Mandatory workshops (1X4= 4 credits)
 - i. Writing a research proposal
 - ii. Programming-II
 - iii. Dissemination of data (How to make up composite figures for presentation and publication, how to create quality posters for research conferences)

Spring Semester:

- k. Psychology Journal Club= 1 Credit
- l. Graduate Research Seminar = 1 Credit
- m. Teaching assistantship- 1 Credit
- n. Research activities- 1 or 2 Credits

- o. Mandatory Workshops (1X 4= 4 Credits)
 - i. Handling and collection of data- III(Statistics)
 - ii. Programming - III
 - iii. Telling an academic story : Qualitative methods
 - iv. Pedagogical practice- I

Psychology Thesis proposal:

- 12. **By November 15th** of their third academic year, students will submit the first draft of their thesis proposal document, styled as an APA project proposal to their thesis committee. The students will be encouraged to turn this proposal to a funding application from external sources.
- 13. By the end of the semester students will present their thesis proposal defense followed by a closed examination with the thesis committee. On passing the proposal defense, students will advance to PhD candidacy and be registered for a PhD. Following the thesis proposal, student should schedule biannual committee meetings with the thesis committee to track progress until the defense of the thesis.
- 14. Depending on the opportunity and funding, students may apply to be a visiting scholar at another university for a limited period of time. The learning outcomes of such visiting positions must be discussed with their advisor(s).

Years 4 and 5 (25 credits each)

- 15. Year long activities spanning both semesters
 - a. Psychology Journal Club= 1 Credit (4)
 - b. Graduate Research Seminar = 1 Credit (4)
 - c. Teaching assistantship- 1 Credit (4)
 - d. Research activities-30 Credits (three 8 credits and one six credit semester)
 - e. Mandatory Workshops (1 Credit each) (8)
 - i. Pedagogy II and III
 - ii. Programming - IV
 - iii. Effective conference strategies
 - iv. Thesis writing I & II

- v. Effective academic job search strategies, Writing research and teaching philosophy statements
 - vi. Alternative careers for PhDs
 - vii. Writing good grants
 - viii. Additional ethical training
16. The students will be expected to present their research in reputable national and international conferences, symposia and meetings in the field, contingent to applying and obtaining funding support from appropriate bodies
17. Students are expected to publish their research in peer reviewed journals that are internationally reputable. Bear in mind that non-internationally reputable outlets will not be considered, and might even work against you in your career. At least one article accepted, in press, or published is highly recommended before a thesis defense is scheduled. Students should note that publications in other forms (e.g., book chapters, encyclopedia chapters, policy papers, user manuals) may not be well-regarded, except when the (expected) impact of their work in such outlets is recognized (e.g., a chapter in *Handbook of Social Psychology*).
18. Towards the end of the fifth year the candidate will write their thesis, publicly defend the dissertation, followed by a closed door examination by the thesis committee. Following successful completion, the student will be eligible for a PhD degree awarded by the university.
19. Before they graduate, they should aim to have some international reputation, through their published work, conference presentations, and involvement as reviewers of reputable journals.
20. All students and candidates will abide by policies and standards laid out by the committees of the University with respect to ethics, academic honesty and integrity, professional conduct, disciplinary infractions, and sexual harassment at all times.