

**Graduate Handbook Supplement for
The Behavior Analysis Doctoral Program
Department of Psychology
West Virginia University
2018-2019**

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Program Goals and History

The behavior analysis graduate program trains students in basic research, theory, and applications of behavior principles. Through research, course work, and practica, students develop skills in the experimental and applied analysis of behavior, including a strong conceptual background and methods appropriate for developing behavioral technologies. The basic, conceptual, and applied areas are integrated in the curriculum; however a student may emphasize either basic or applied research.

The goal of the program is to produce a behavior analyst who is qualified to teach a variety of courses in psychology, who can function effectively in either an academic or an applied setting, and who can use the principles and findings of the science of behavior in solving significant problems of human behavior.

The Behavior Analysis Program at West Virginia University was started in 1976, following a major reorganization of the Department undertaken by then-Department Chair Roger Maley and his Associate Chair, Jon Krapfl. Don Hake was recruited to West Virginia University to be the program coordinator, a position that he held until his untimely death in 1982. The founding faculty members of the Behavior Analysis program were Don Hake, Andy Lattal, Kent Parker, and Jim Shafer. Andy Lattal served as the coordinator of the program from Hake's death in 1982 until 2012. Of the present faculty, Andy Lattal arrived in 1972, Mike Perone in 1984, Karen Anderson in 2003, Claire St. Peter in 2006, and Kathryn Kestner in 2015.

Since its inception, the program has awarded Master's degrees and Ph.D. degrees to students who have come from all parts of the United States and from many other countries to study with our faculty. The Department of Psychology is a past recipient of the Society for the Advancement of Behavior Analysis Award for Enduring Programmatic Contributions to Behavior Analysis. This award is given to an agency, department, or facility of an organization that contributes to the ongoing and enduring development of behavior analysis. In addition, the behavior analysis program is fully accredited by the Association for Behavior Analysis International, and has a graduate-level course sequence that has been verified by the Behavior Analysis Certification Board.

Over the years, our faculty members have been recognized for their teaching, research, and professional service through their receipt of external research grants, major teaching and research awards given by both the university and by professional societies, service on boards of national and international organizations and journals, and editorships and associate editorships of major behavior-analytic journals. This information about each faculty member is available on individual web sites.

Faculty

[Karen G. Anderson](#), Ph.D., *Associate Professor and Associate Department Chair*

[Kathryn M. Kestner](#), Ph.D., *Assistant Professor*

[Kennon A. Lattal](#), Ph.D., *Eberly College Centennial Professor*

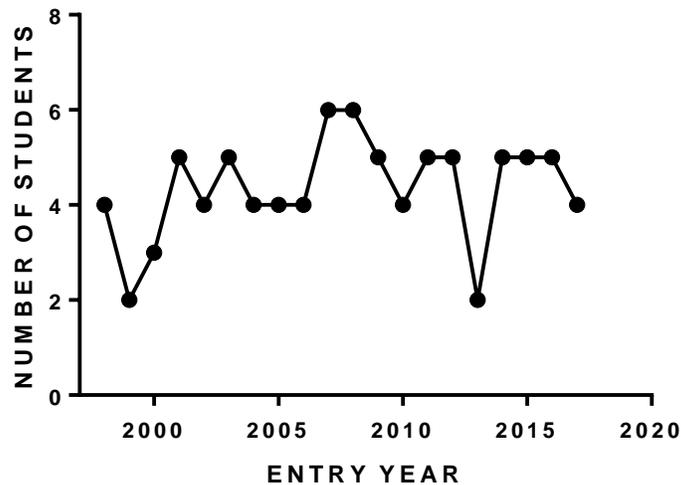
[Michael Perone](#), Ph.D., *Professor and Associate Dean for Faculty*

[Claire C. St. Peter](#), Ph.D., *Associate Professor and Program Coordinator for Behavior Analysis*

Student Data

How many students enter the program?

From 2007-2017, we admitted an average of 4.7 students per year, with a range from two to six students. The number of students admitted per year depends on the quality and interests of the applicants as well as the number of funded positions that are available in the program.



What is the median time to completion?

Students are tracked to complete the Ph.D. within 3 years if they enter with an acceptable Master's degree or in 4 years if they need to complete a Master's degree en route to the doctoral degree.

As of 2017, the mean time required for all students (regardless of entrance degree, using data from 1998 through 2017) to receive a Ph.D. is 4.7 years. The median time to receipt of a Master's degree is 2.3 years.

What is the status of recent graduates of the program?

The table on the following page lists students who have received their Ph.D. from our program area in the last 10 years, along with their entry year and information associated with their first position and current position. Almost all of our Ph.D. recipients remain active in behavior analysis.

The Behavior Analysis Program's Commitment to Students

Among other things, students can expect from the faculty:

- Exposure to a wide range of contemporary topics and issues in behavior analysis and psychology.
 - Timely feedback on all assignments, including theses, prelims and dissertations.
 - Adequate access for discussion of matters of mutual interest.
 - Quality teaching in and outside of the classroom.
 - Within the constraints of time and other resources, the making available of research and practicum opportunities of interest to the student.
 - Commitment to student development and their involvement in the field of behavior analysis/behavioral psychology.
 - Strong role models for how a professional behavior analyst should function.
-

Program Milestones

The guidelines and deadlines shown below were developed to help students complete the critical activities of the Behavior Analysis Training Program. There are two tables, one for students who entered the program with a bachelor's degree, and one for students who entered with an approved master's thesis.

Students need to know the dates by which these activities should be accomplished to plan their graduate careers effectively. The consequences for timely progress are too numerous to list; however, the consequences for a lack of progress are straightforward. Therefore, they have been listed as part of the tables.

Timely progress through the program is required for efficient use of departmental and program resources and faculty effort. Progress is assessed by a series of "milestones:"

- The "recommended" dates in the tables are the dates by which students are expected to pass these milestones.
- The "slow progress" dates indicate progress that may put the student in jeopardy of completing the program within four years (three years for students entering with an approved master's thesis). Therefore, missing the slow progress date will lead automatically to probation to warn the student of inadequate progress. Probation is effective as of the slow progress date, and will be reported to the student in writing and recorded in the student's permanent file. Conditions for changing from probationary status back to good standing will be specified in writing by the Behavior Analysis Training Committee. If the student is put on probation simultaneously for two reasons ("double probation") the student may be dismissed from the program.
- The "latest acceptable" dates are the dates by which the milestones must be passed or else the student may be dismissed from the program. Latest acceptable dates and slow progress dates are negotiable only under extraordinary circumstances, and then only by written request (with full rationale) to the Behavior Analysis Training Committee.

A few other items that appear in the tables may need amplification:

- "Approval" for a thesis or dissertation refers to the final acceptance of an electronic version to the library. This requirement is met after all course work has been completed, a shuttle sheet request has been filed at least three weeks prior to the oral defense, the defense has been passed, all corrections have been made on the document, the manuscript has been submitted electronically and has been accepted by the library.

- The “GTC” is the Graduate Training Committee, the “Adv. Com.” is the student’s Advising Committee, and the “BATC” is the Behavior Analysis Training Committee (the program area training committee for Behavior Analysis). Each of these committees is described in the Psychology Department Graduate Handbook.

Additional Year of Funding

To request an additional year of funding, students submit a one-page (12-point font with 1-in margins) rationale for remaining at WVU for an additional year, along with a copy of their vita to their area coordinator by the deadline specified in the Graduate Handbook. The training area considers the extent to which the request is likely to substantially improve the student’s professional development beyond the opportunities afforded by going on the job market at the normal time. The training area also considers the costs to the program area associated with loss of a spot for an incoming student through funding a current student for an additional year. The student will typically receive a decision about the application for another year of funding within one month of the submission of the application. A decision will be relayed by email from the program area coordinator.

Milestones for Students Entering Without an Approved Master's Thesis

REQUIREMENT	RECOMMENDED DATE	SLOW-PROGRESS DATE (grounds for probation)	LATEST-ACCEPTABLE DATE (grounds for dismissal)
<i>Plan of Study submitted</i>	Oct 15, year 1	Oct 15, year 1	--
<i>Thesis proposal approved</i>	May 15, year 1	Dec 15, year 2	May 15, year 2
<i>Thesis approved by library</i>	May 1, year 2	Dec 15, year 3	May 15, year 3
<i>Comprehensive Exam attempted</i>	Fall administration, year 3	--	Fall administration, year 3
<i>Comprehensive Exam passed</i>	Spring administration, year 3	--	Spring administration, year 3
<i>Research Proposal passed</i>	Dec 15, year 3	May 15, year 3	Dec 15, year 4
<i>Dissertation proposal approved</i>	May 15, year 3	Dec 15, year 4	May 15, year 4
<i>Dissertation approved by library</i>	May 1, year 4	Dec 15, year 5	--
<i>Annual activity report</i>	Apr 15, each year	May 1, each year	--

Milestones for Students Entering With an Approved Master's Thesis

REQUIREMENT	RECOMMENDED DATE	SLOW-PROGRESS DATE (grounds for probation)	LATEST-ACCEPTABLE DATE (grounds for dismissal)
<i>Plan of Study submitted</i>	Oct 15, year 1	Oct 15, year 1	--
<i>Thesis proposal approved</i>	--	--	--
<i>Thesis approved by library</i>	--	--	--
<i>Comprehensive Exam attempted</i>	Fall administration, year 2	--	Fall administration, year 2
<i>Comprehensive Exam passed</i>	Spring administration, year 2	--	Spring administration, year 2
<i>Research Proposal passed</i>	Dec 15, year 2	May 15, year 2	Dec 15, year 3
<i>Dissertation proposal approved</i>	May 15, year 2	Dec 15, year 3	May 15, year 3
<i>Dissertation approved by library</i>	May 1, year 3	Dec 15, year 4	--
<i>Annual activity report</i>	Apr 15, each year	May 1, each year	--

The Plan of Study

Students should select advisors early during their first semester on campus. The advisor then should consult with the student to complete the plan of study form, which appears on the next pages. The completed plan of study must be submitted to the BA Program coordinator by October 15 of the student's first semester. It then will be reviewed by the Behavior Analysis Training Committee (BATC), which will assign three of its members to serve as the student's advising committee. The current Plan of Study form can be downloaded from the department documentation shared drive.

Course Requirements

Refer to the [List of Psychology Graduate Courses](#) for descriptions of the courses listed below.

A. Departmental Course Requirements

- PSYC 511 Research Design and Data Analysis I
- PSYC 512 Research Design and Data Analysis II
- An additional course in research design (Behavior Analysis students take PSYC 611- Single-Subject Research)
- A course in the historical/conceptual base of psychology (Behavior Analysis students take PSYC 732, Behavior Theory and Philosophy)
- PSYC 593A Contemporary Issues

B. Behavior Analysis Program Course Requirements

1. Principles of Behavior (45 hours): PSYC 531 (Experimental Analysis of Behavior)
2. Conceptual Analysis (90 hours):
 - a. PSYC 732 (Behavior Theory and Philosophy)
 - b. PSYC 721 (History & Systems) OR PSYC 739 (Verbal Behavior)
3. Basic Behavior Analysis (90 hours): Any two of the following:
 - a. PSYC 532 (Human Behavior)
 - b. PSYC 733 (Stimulus Control & Memory)
 - c. PSYC 734 (Reinforcement & Punishment)
 - d. PSYC 736 (Advanced Experimental Analysis of Behavior)
4. Applied Behavior Analysis (90 hours):
 - a. PSYC 533 (Applied Behavior Analysis)
 - b. PSYC 630/730 (Behavior Analysis Practicum) OR PSYC 735 (Assessment & Intervention for Severe Behavior) OR PSYC 736 (Advanced Applied Behavior Analysis)
5. Ethics (45 hours): PSYC 609 (Ethics in Behavior Analysis)
6. Specialized Elective (45 hours):
 - a. PSYC 615 (Software Design in Psychology)
 - b. PSYC 722 (Biological Aspects of Behavior)
 - c. PSYC 754 (Clinical Psychopharmacology)
 - d. Other approved 3-credit course
7. Supervised Experiential Learning (90 hours): At least one credit of PSYC 795 and PSYC 731 per semester

Sample Course Sequences

The following table illustrates a potential course sequence. The actual courses offered in a given year may deviate from those in the table. The overall structure and relative time spent in formal courses, research, and teaching/practicum activities is the same regardless of the particular courses offered by the Department of Psychology in a given year.

Each Fall semester, students in the program are given an updated 2-year projection of advanced course offerings by the program faculty.

Possible Course Sequence

	Fall Semester	hrs.	Spring Semester	hrs.
Year 1	Research and Data Analysis I	3	Research and Data Analysis II	3
	Experimental Analysis of Behavior	3	Applied Behavior Analysis	3
	Research Issues in Behavior Analysis	3	Research Issues in Behavior Analysis	3
	Contemporary Issues	1	Independent Research	3
	Professional Issues in Behavior Analysis	1	Contemporary Issues	1
	Seminar on Teaching Psych.	1		
		12		12
Year 2	Single-Subject Research Methods	3	Behavior Theory and Philosophy	3
	Ethics in Behavior Analysis	3	Assessment & Intervention	3
	Research Issues in Behavior Analysis	3	Research Issues in Behavior Analysis	3
	Independent Research	2	Independent Research	2
	Contemporary Issues	1	Contemporary Issues	1
		12		12
Year 3	Ethics in Behavior Analysis	3	History & Systems	3
	Human Behavior	3	Verbal Behavior	3
	Research Issues in Behavior Analysis	3	Research Issues in Behavior Analysis	3
	Independent Research	2	Independent Research	3
	Contemporary Issues	1	Contemporary Issues	1
		12		13
Year 4	Behavior Analysis Practicum	3	Behavior Analysis Practicum	3
	Advanced Course	3	Advanced Course	3
	Research Issues in Behavior Analysis	3	Research Issues in Behavior Analysis	3
	Independent Research	3	Independent Research	3
	Contemporary Issues	1	Contemporary Issues	1
		13		13

Other Program Requirements

Doctoral Preliminary Examination

Purpose

The purpose of the preliminary examination is to evaluate the student's breadth of knowledge regarding core concepts in experimental and applied behavior analysis.

General Procedure

Upon entry into the program, students will receive a bank of terms/questions related to foundational knowledge in the experimental analysis of behavior and applied behavior analysis. On a specified exam date at the start of their second year in the program, students will complete a proctored examination consisting of a subset of those terms/questions in the form of fill-in-the-blank questions or free-response terms or definitions.

Evaluation Procedures

Students must complete the examination with at least 85% accuracy. Students who do not meet this criterion must wait one month before retaking a new version of the examination. When a student must retake the examination, the student will schedule the reexamination date with the area coordinator. All examinations must occur between August 15 and December 15 of the student's second year in the program. The preliminary examination must be completed before a student can attempt either portion of the qualifying examination. Students who do not pass the preliminary examination by the second attempt have failed the prelim (see "[Rejection after Failing Examinations](#)" section, below)

Doctoral Qualifying Examination

Purpose

The primary purpose of the qualifying examination is to evaluate the student's qualification to pursue a doctoral degree in the Behavior Analysis Program Area at West Virginia University. Specifically, the qualifying examinations are designed to assess the student's knowledge of behavior analysis and the ability to solve problems in this area.

General Procedure

There are two parts to the examination: an integrative paper and a research proposal. Qualifying examinations may be taken after the thesis prospectus has been approved by the student's thesis committee and the student has passed the preliminary examination. Failure to pass either portion of the qualifying examination by the latest acceptable date constitutes grounds for dismissal from the program.

The examinations are scheduled at the mutual convenience of the student and the committee, provided that the initial attempt is scheduled by December 15 of the second year or third year for students entering with or without an approved master's thesis. Students not attempting qualifying examinations by these deadlines will be placed on probation by the Behavior Analysis Training Committee (BATC).

Prior to dismissal or probation for not meeting qualifying examination deadlines, the BATC will consider extenuating circumstances. Both portions of the examination, including retakes, must be passed by December 15 of the fourth year (seventh semester) for students entering the program with a Bachelor's degree and by December 15 of the third year (fifth semester) for students entering with an approved Master's thesis. Failure to do so constitutes grounds for dismissal from the program on the basis of unsatisfactory progress.

Format

The student will have access to reading materials during the exam, but the work is to be done independently. To that end, the examinations must consist of the student's original work; ideas for which the student has received feedback from faculty or peers are ineligible.

The proposal should be prepared in APA Publication Manual (current edition) format. Students should use 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins. A hard copy and an electronic copy of the final document is to be given to each member of the committee by the deadline.

Timing

For both examinations described below, "days" refers to calendar days.

Integrative Paper

Rationale. This exam requires that the student integrate information across a body of literature to make cohesive arguments about a particular issue.

Committee selection. The proposal will be evaluated by a two-person committee (and, if needed, a tie-breaker) composed of primary faculty members from the Behavior Analysis Training Committee. The student will select one committee member. The other primary reader will be appointed by the Coordinator of the Behavior Analysis program area. If a tie-breaker is needed, the person will be selected at random from the primary faculty members of the Behavior Analysis Training Committee, excluding the individuals who served on the original committee.

Proposal. The student will complete the template cover sheet document and attach author guidelines for the proposed outlet and a one-page proposal of the paper. Each cover sheet will include style of paper, topic of paper, where it would be published, proposed dates for the examination, and name of one committee member. The style of paper could be a literature review, position paper, critique of existing research, theoretical paper, reply to a conceptual/theoretical article, or integration of basic process and applied technology. The topic of the paper must be behavior analytic in nature. The outlet should specify both journal and type of submission, and include a reproduction of the author guidelines for that journal and submission type. Students seeking approval for a document longer than 15 pages (exclusive of title page, abstract, tables, figures, and references) should include the request and a justification on the cover page.

The one-page proposal should resemble an abstract, with sufficient information for the committee to determine the general thesis of the paper.

The committee will evaluate the proposal based on the judgment that the resulting paper could be published if done well. Because the paper must be publishable upon submission, proposals for an experiment are not acceptable. The two primary committee members will review the proposal within 30 days of its submission and approve, revise, or reject the proposal.

Format. The format of the final submission should align with the student's approved proposal. The manuscript should not exceed 15 pages of text (exclusive of title page, abstract, tables, figures, and references), unless the student received prior approval for a longer paper.

Content. Although the committee will tolerate some shifts in approach from the approved proposal, such shifts may be risky. The examination must cover the approved topic.

Timing. Students must assemble their committee and submit their proposals between August 15 and April 1. The student determines the start date of the examination, which can occur any time during the calendar year. For second attempts, the start date of the examination will determine the start date of revisions (which will be due 7 days after receipt of feedback); students should consider both the initial submission and possible revision when selecting a start date.

The student should form the committee at least 45 days before the anticipated start date and submit the written proposal at least 30 days before the proposed start date. If the committee believes that substantive edits to the proposal are necessary, the committee will provide the student with feedback about the proposal during the 30-day interim between the proposal submission and the start date. From the start date, the student will have at least 45 days to complete the manuscript.

Normally, the student will receive feedback about the submission 30 days from the start date (exceptions may occur, particularly for manuscripts submitted during the summer term). If this is the second attempt at the examination, the student will have 7 days from receipt of the feedback to revise and resubmit the manuscript.

Evaluation procedures. Each committee member will submit a recommendation and brief justification, including suggestions for revision where appropriate. The committee member can recommend that the paper be passed, revised (for the second attempt only), or failed. Under exceptional circumstances, the reviewer can recommend a "pass with distinction," which would reflect the reviewer's opinion that the paper could be accepted without revision. The reviewers will discuss their decisions and rationales and will develop a final decision through consensus. The Chair of the committee will summarize the comments for the student in a written document.

If the initial two reviewers are unable to come to consensus, the paper will be graded by a “tie breaker,” who will follow the same procedures as the original graders. In this case, the overall grade on the examination is determined by the recommendation made by the majority of graders.

The student passes the examination when the majority of graders recommend pass.

The first attempt at the paper will either pass or fail. If the paper fails, the student will receive feedback about the reason for the decision. Under this circumstance, the student should prepare a new or revised proposal and initiate the steps required to complete the examination following receipt of the feedback. The process and grading for the second attempt will be identical to the first attempt, except that a new committee may be established.

Grading for the second attempt includes the possibility of a revision. Graders will recommend a revision if the core themes of the manuscript are sound, but the paper is not passable without revision to the substance. Students will have 7 days to revise the manuscript following receipt of feedback. If the majority of graders recommend failure for the second attempt at the examination (initial submission or revision), BATC will meet to discuss the examinations and make a recommendation regarding termination from the doctoral degree program.

Following completion of the examination, students will respond to a brief survey regarding the strategies that they used to prepare for and complete the examination. This information will be used to improve the examination process and, if possible, as a resource for students.

Research Proposal

Rationale. This exam requires that the student develop a proposal for an experiment about one of the two topics provided that has the potential to advance the understanding of the topic under investigation.

Committee selection. Students must notify the area coordinator of the date at which they plan to complete the research proposal and of their one selected member of the committee. Notification must occur between August 16 and April 30 and must be at least 21 days in advance of the research proposal start date. On notification, the area coordinator will assemble a three-member committee to administer and grade the exam. One member of this committee will be selected by the student. The area coordinator will select the other two members and appoint one of the members to be chair. At least two members of the committee must be primary members of the Behavior Analysis Training Committee.

Format. The proposal should be at least 10 and no more than 12 typed double-spaced pages of 12-point Times New Roman text (1-inch margins), excluding the title page, tables, figures, and references. The title page should include the topic being addressed in addition to the proposal title. The manuscript should not include an abstract and cannot include appendices.

Content. The proposal should include as its introduction a literature review based on published material (theoretical or empirical) that is sufficient to demonstrate a sound scientific rationale for undertaking the research. Thus, the student must explicitly establish the potential significance of the research to the existing (published) research on the topic. In the separate sections delineated in the *APA Publication Manual*, the proposal should describe the instrumentation (proposals need not include lengthy subject and apparatus sections - these sections can be combined into a single section in which these two topics are described in general terms), experimental design, methods of evaluation, data analysis, and possible results. Additional information such as ethical considerations, subject selection, setting, etc., may be necessary in applied proposals but should be limited to essential elements. Instructions to be given to human participants may be included in tables rather than as part of the 12 pages of substantive content.

Topic selection. A choice of two topics will be provided by the committee. The committee may further define either or both topics by indicating sub-topics (e.g., inhibitory stimulus control as a subtopic of discrimination and generalization). Students may ask the chair of the committee to clarify the topics. The proposed research must be an experimental analysis of the selected topic.

Timing. Students must request a specific date and time for the first attempt of the research proposal, such that the requested date occurs by December 15 of the second year or third year for students entering with or without an approved master's thesis, respectively. The student has fourteen (14) days to write the research proposal from the start date and time.

Evaluation Procedures. The proposal will be graded on the significance of the problem addressed, the importance and relevance of the literature cited, strength of rationale, soundness of experimental design, creativity, feasibility, and writing style. Each member of the committee will evaluate the proposal independently as to whether it is a failure, a pass, or a pass with distinction. The level of passage or a failure will be determined by consensus of the committee members.

Notification of performance on the research proposal normally will be available within three weeks of its submission, provided that occurs during a regular semester and at least three weeks before the semester end. For proposals submitted at other times, the area coordinator will tell students when to expect notification.

Performance evaluated as a pass or pass with distinction will result in a memo to the student from the chair of the committee. A copy will be placed in the student's file.

When performance is evaluated as a failure, students will be provided with written feedback justifying the decision. The committee may wish to reserve comment on each specific error made and, instead, address only the major problems with the proposal. The committee also may make suggestions on how the student might remediate apparent deficits. A copy of this feedback will be

kept by the committee chair and will be placed in the student's file only if the student fails the second attempt. A failure on the first attempt of the research proposal requires a retake of the proposal. The procedure for scheduling a retake is identical to the procedures for the initial attempt, except that students need not specify a committee member. Retakes will be administered and graded by the same committee as was assembled for the first attempt.

Admission to Ph.D. Candidacy/Rejection after Failing Examinations

Admission. Admission to doctoral candidacy requires satisfactory completion of all requirements for the M.S. degree, passing the doctoral degree preliminary and qualifying examinations, a record of satisfactory course work and grades, a record of satisfactory performance of professional duties (e.g., as a teaching assistant or practicum student), a record of satisfactory involvement in research beyond that required for the M.S. thesis, and a record of professional behavior in keeping with the ethical codes of the American Psychological Association and Behavior Analysis Certification Board.

Rejection. Failing both attempts of either portion of the qualifying examination will result in a recommendation to deny candidacy for the Ph.D. degree. Should this occur, the BATC will review the failed examination(s). Upon completion of this review, a final decision regarding termination from the doctoral degree program will be made by vote of the primary and secondary faculty members of the BATC. Student Representatives of the committee will not participate in the discussion or vote on this issue. The decision of the BATC will then be conveyed to the Graduate Training Committee for review.

Students will be notified, in writing, of a decision to terminate their continuance in the doctoral degree program. If a student has not yet completed the M.S. degree, but fails either any part of the examinations twice, the student will be allowed to continue in the program as an M.S. degree candidate so long as grades and progress toward the M.S. degree are regarded as satisfactory by the BATC. Students wishing to appeal the termination decision may do so to the Department Chair, as outlined in the [Department of Psychology Graduate Handbook](#).

Doctoral Qualifying Exam:
Sample Research Question Topics

1. Discrimination and Generalization (stimulus control, blocking, overshadowing, etc.)
2. Escape and Avoidance
3. Punishment
4. Response Acquisition (errorless learning, shaping, imitation, etc.)
5. Response Maintenance (schedules of reinforcement, parameters of reinforcement, etc.)
6. Conditioned Reinforcement
7. Concurrent Operants
8. Memory (conditional discrimination, matching to samples, etc.)
9. Social Behavior
10. Verbal Behavior

Or any topic covered in coursework

Research Involvement of Graduate Students

Graduate students in the Behavior Analysis program are expected to be involved fully in research from matriculation until graduation with the Ph.D. degree. Research involvement encompasses several activities, each of which is described in this document.

Development of Research Skills

Research training in the program progresses from structured participation on projects to relative independence. The student should consult with the research advisor and the advising committee to identify the required skills and a plan for developing the skills needed to be a successful independent researcher. The specific skills will depend on the student's areas of interest.

During the first year, students participate in faculty-directed research projects and begin to develop the idea for their Master's thesis, which should be proposed by the end of the first year. Students typically spend their second year in the program working on their thesis and continuing to develop the skills necessary to pass their qualifying examinations, which should be completed by the end of their third year. By the third year, students should be conducting more research projects, including projects that they have developed as a result of their thesis and other research involvement during the first two years. The dissertation is expected to develop from one or more of the research lines under way in the third year. The dissertation should be proposed by the end of the third year and completed by the end of the fourth year.

For students entering with a Master's degree, the first year is spent becoming involved in research through a first-year project and developing the skills necessary to successfully complete qualifying exams. Students entering with a Master's degree should propose their dissertation by the end of the second year in the program, and complete the dissertation by the end of the third year.

The program provides opportunities for students to present and receive feedback on their research during Behavior Analysis Seminar meetings. During BA Seminar, students are provided with a half-hour or hour each academic year to present one of their ongoing research projects. Students are provided with feedback from the faculty regarding their project and presentation skills.

Courses Directly Related to Research

One half of the course load each semester in the first two years is devoted to research involvement through a combination of three courses. Psychology 731 (Research Issues in Behavior Analysis) requires that students attend one laboratory meeting per week and that the student be involved in research in one laboratory. Other meetings, such as specially arranged

reading groups, are not offered for credit under Psychology 731. Psychology 795 (Independent Studies) may be taken to provide academic credit for involvement in other laboratories, for Master's thesis research, and for dissertation research.

First-Year Research Involvement

During the first year, the student should make significant progress in acquiring the technical skills needed to become an independent researcher. To set the stage for continuing research activity, faculty advisors are responsible for seeing that their first-year advisees are engaged in an experiment, and not simply bibliographic or other "library-type" research, no later than September of the student's first year in the program. This initial project can be either a project on which the advisor is working also or it can be a new project initiated jointly by the student and advisor. This initial research project may lead to, and perhaps become part of, the M.S. thesis research. Regardless of its outcome and status vis à vis the master's thesis, this initial research activity will define the first-year project.

Involvement in Laboratories

Students are expected to participate in the laboratory activities of at least one faculty member throughout their tenure in the program. Students may participate in research with more than one faculty member, either within or outside the behavior analysis program. There are two additional guidelines concerning such activity. First, only one research project can be started during the student's first semester in the program. Second, involvement in more than two laboratories at one time is not recommended for students in their first two years in the program, when the competing time demands of research, course work, and teaching are high.

The M.S. Thesis

The M.S. thesis must be an experimental study and should be completed by the end of the student's second year in the program (assuming that the student entered the program with a Baccalaureate degree). The thesis is a collaborative research activity between the student and the faculty thesis advisor. It is the program's way of introducing the student to, and teaching directly about, the methods and contents of an area of behavioral research.

The thesis proposal should be a document of no more than 25 pages of text that presents the research problem and the methods to be used in the investigation. The presentation of the research problem should be in sufficient depth and breadth that the rationale for the study is clear to the faculty committee members. The methods should be presented in sufficient detail that the procedures of the experiment could be replicated on the basis of the document alone. A section on data analysis also should be included in the proposal. Minimally, the dependent variables to be collected from session to session, and how they are to be examined and appraised relative to the experimental manipulations, should be described. The methods used

to compute any derived measures (e.g., ratio of responses on two alternatives, percent “correct,” index of curvature, discrimination index, etc.), and the means by which they will be presented and interpreted, should be described in detail. Unconventional analyses and analyses of novel procedures require more description than do conventional, widely used analyses. The data analyses to be performed should be described in enough detail that they would be clear to a psychologist generally familiar with analyzing experiments. The thesis proposal functions to protect the student by delineating the agreement between the student and the thesis committee as to what will constitute the thesis project.

The timelines for the thesis are as follows: By the end of the first semester (December 15 of Year 1), a student should have a working title for the thesis. By mid-March of the student’s first year in the program, the student should be prepared to outline the proposed project and its rationale as their BA Seminar presentation for that year (unless the student is presenting other data). The proposal is to be approved by the thesis advising committee no later than May 15 of the first year.

The recommended date for the completion of the thesis (final meeting held, final document approved, bound, and thesis turned into the library) is May 1 of the second year. The final thesis document is expected to contain a well-developed literature review, a description of the method and results, and a discussion of the methodological and conceptual issues raised by the research. The final document should be distributed to each member of the committee in both electronic and paper copies, the latter of which should be single-sided and clipped with a non-permanent binding. The paper copy of the document should be accompanied by a cover letter that includes the date, time, and location of the meeting.

Requirements for the thesis committee composition are described in the [Department of Psychology Graduate Handbook](#).

The Ph.D. Dissertation

The dissertation is distinguished from the M.S. thesis by its scope and by the significantly greater independent contribution of the student to the idea for the work and its subsequent development. Normally, the dissertation will involve a series of two or more interrelated experiments that investigate different dimensions of a significant problem in behavior analysis.

Dissertation documents should be distributed to each member of the committee in both electronic and paper copies, the latter of which should be single-sided and clipped with a non-permanent binding. The paper copy of the document should be accompanied by a cover letter that includes the date, time, and location of the meeting. The document should be concise but thorough, and should not exceed 25 pages of text. The presentation of the research problem should be in sufficient depth and breadth that the rationale for the study is clear to the faculty

committee members. The methods should be presented in sufficient detail that the procedures of the experiment could be replicated on the basis of the document alone. A section on data analysis also should be included in the proposal. Minimally, the dependent variables to be collected from session to session, and how they are to be examined and appraised relative to the experimental manipulations, should be described. The methods used to compute any derived measures (e.g., ratio of responses on two alternatives, percent “correct,” index of curvature, discrimination index, etc.), and the means by which they will be presented and interpreted, should be described in detail. Unconventional analyses and analyses of novel procedures require more description than do conventional, widely used analyses. The data analyses to be performed should be described in enough detail that they would be clear to a psychologist generally familiar with analyzing experiments. The dissertation proposal functions to protect the student by delineating the agreement between the student and the dissertation committee as to what will constitute the dissertation project.

The dissertation should be proposed to the dissertation committee no later than September 15 of the student’s fourth year in the program (third year in the case of students entering with approved M.S. theses). The dissertation should be completed by May 1 of the student’s fourth year (third year in the case of students entering with approved M.S. theses).

General requirements for the dissertation committee composition are described in the Department of Psychology Graduate Handbook. Although four-person committees are permitted in the Department, students in the Behavior Analysis program area requires at least a five-person dissertation committee. Two committee members must be from the Behavior Analysis program area, one committee member from outside the program area, and one committee member from outside the Department. The fifth committee member can be selected from any one of those classifications. The majority of committee members must be members of the Graduate Faculty.

Role of the Faculty Thesis and Dissertation Advisor

The thesis advisor functions as a senior collaborator, often suggesting the research area and problem but also allowing the student flexibility in articulating the specific problem and developing the design of the experiment. By contrast, the dissertation advisor may be seen as a junior collaborator, with the student taking leadership in both suggesting the research problem and designing the experiment under the more indirect guidance of the advisor.

Thesis and Dissertation Proposal and Final Meeting Presentations

Students should assume that the faculty committee members have read the written proposal document. Therefore, presentations of both background and research methods should be brief.

The entire proposal presentation should be no more than 10 minutes long, and devoted primarily to method. The remainder of the meeting will be devoted to discussion and questions.

The final meeting presentation should be on the order of a research presentation at a conference symposium, that is, no more than 20 to 25 minutes to cover rationale, methods, results, and discussion. As with the proposal meeting, the remaining time will be devoted to discussion and questions.

Normally, and unless the advisor suggests otherwise, proposal and final meetings should be scheduled for two hours. Proposal meetings are closed to those not on the thesis or dissertation committee, except by prior agreements between the committee chair and the student. Final meetings are open to all members of the University community.

Practica

Practica Guidelines

The supervisor for each Behavior Analysis Practicum will provide the students with a syllabus like those used in graduate-level content classes. The syllabus should describe how the instructor can be reached, any readings that will be used, the goals of the practicum, the requirements for grades, the schedule of activities, and special considerations for the population with whom the student will be working.

Each Behavior Analysis Practicum requires that the student complete a contract for his or her activities and accomplishments. The contract must specify the goals and objectives of the practicum including: the target population, a description of the problems what will be addressed, a description of the evaluation procedures that will be used to determine whether the procedures have been successful in addressing the problem, and the dates or a description of a time-line for the practicum. The contract also should describe other responsibilities of the student and the supervisors including: the student's hours, weekly schedule, and special days not working on the practicum (e.g., for conferences, vacations). It should list all of the supervisors (e.g., faculty and on-site supervisors if applicable), how often the supervisors will meet with the student, how they will observe the student or products of the student's behavior, and how they will evaluate the student's performance. The contract should be signed by all interested parties. Minimally the contract should be signed by the student and the faculty supervisor. Each contract signee should receive a copy and a copy should be placed in the student's folder. The contract will typically be structured in a way to meet the requirements for the Behavior Analysis Certification Board.

Each Behavior Analysis Practicum that takes place outside of the department also requires an evaluation by an on-site supervisor. The evaluation should allow the on-site supervisor to opportunity to address the quality of work performed by the student specifically related to the goals or objectives indicated in the contract. It is the student's responsibility to see that the outside supervisor carries out the evaluation at the end of each semester of the practicum and forwards it to the faculty supervisor of the practicum or the Coordinator of the Behavior Analysis Program.

Practica Opportunities

Specific practicum opportunities vary somewhat from year to year as a function of demand, availability, student interests and faculty availability. Examples of some recent practicum opportunities are listed below.

1) Children exhibiting problem behaviors in school settings:

Students on this practicum work closely with school professionals and parents to conduct functional assessments, develop behavior support plans, train care-providers in support plans, and monitor intervention efficacy. Also, students may assist in developing and conducting workshops on behavior management for teachers, administrators, other school professionals, and parents. Children seen on this practicum include children with disabilities (e.g., mental retardation, autism) as well as typically developing children exhibiting behavior problems.

2) Children with autism:

Students have the opportunity to develop and implement educational and behavioral programs for children with autism. Students are involved in training parents, educators, and other professionals to conduct programs for children with autism. Also, students may be involved in providing workshops on “best practices” for individuals with autism.

3) Inter-disciplinary feeding and swallowing team:

Students attend a weekly interdisciplinary feeding and swallowing clinic. The clinic team includes social work, nutrition, pediatric medicine, occupation and physical therapy, and psychology. The student conducts a clinic-based assessment for all children and, for children whose mealtime problems are related primarily to environmental factors, conducts more intensive assessment and intervention in the community. Examples of presenting problems include food selectivity, food refusal, and deficits in self-feeding skills. Students have the opportunity to provide workshops on behavioral interventions for feeding problems.

4) Alternative Education Classroom:

Students participate in intake, therapy, and reintegration to schools of origin for elementary-aged children who engage in chronic or severe problem behavior in educational settings. Student duties include screening children for placement, initial teacher consultation and training, functional analysis, treatment development, treatment fading (to develop an intervention appropriate for the school of origin), staff training, and follow-up. This practicum site provides an opportunity to conduct intensive therapy (and a blend of research and therapy) with children who have significant behavioral needs.

Behavior Analysis Specialization for Behavioral Neuroscience, Clinical, and Clinical-Child Program Areas

Eligibility: Any student in the doctoral tracks of the Behavioral Neuroscience, Clinical, or Clinical-Child Program is eligible for the specialization by stating on their Plan of Study their plan to pursue the specialization in behavior analysis.

Requirements: Students must complete the following requirements (note that the stated requirements are the minimum for the specialization, but additional courses may be taken):

(1) Completion of two courses from the following list:

- Psychology 532: Human Behavior
- Psychology 533: Applied Behavior Analysis
- Psychology 611: Single-Subject Design
- Psychology 736 or 737: Special Topics in Experimental Analysis of Behavior and Applied Behavior Analysis, respectively. These special topics courses require the prior approval of the Behavior Analysis Training Committee as being within the specialization requirements.
- Psychology 732: Behavior Theory and Philosophy
- Psychology 734: Reinforcement and Punishment

(2) Completion of one additional course from the above list OR, with the faculty members permission, completion of a substantive Psychology 795 course under the supervision of a Behavior Analysis Program primary (core) faculty member that would involve active participation in a laboratory group and completion of a research project supervised by the faculty member.

(3) Inclusion of a Behavior Analysis Program primary (core) faculty member on the student's dissertation committee.

It also is recommended, but not required, that a Behavior Analysis Program primary (core) faculty member serve on the student's advising committee.

Documentation of specialization: Documentation of the specialization is done by the advising committee during a meeting held for that purpose in the student's last year in the program. *It is the student's responsibility to arrange this meeting.* Upon approval of the specialization, the Advising Committee Chair notifies the Director of Graduate Training that the requirements have been met.

BCBA Certification for Program Graduates

In the course of study for the Ph.D. degree, students may meet the requirements to be eligible to sit for the certification examination to be a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. Students who waive courses upon matriculation, are not yet BACB certified, and wish to seek certification should ensure that the content in the waived courses aligns with content offered by WVU, as specified in the respective approved course sequences. Students who combine courses across institutions have a more extensive application process than those who complete an approved course sequence in its entirety. Additionally, the requirements for certification may change across time. The 4th Edition Task List requirements and WVU-approved coursework are as follows.

A. Ethical and Professional Conduct (45 hrs)

- a. PSYC 609 Ethics in Behavior Analysis

B. Concepts and Principles of Behavior Analysis (45 hrs)

- a. PSYC 531-Experimental Analysis of Behavior -30 hrs
- b. PSYC 732-Behavior Theory and Philosophy-15 hrs

C. Research Methods in Behavior Analysis-Measurement & Experimental Design (45 hrs)

- a. PSYC 611-Single Subject Research

D. Applied Behavior Analysis (105 hrs)

Fundamental Elements of Behavior Change & Specific Behavior Change Procedures (45hrs)-

- a. PSYC 533-Applied Behavior Analysis-20hrs
- b. PSYC 737-Assessment and Treatment of Problem Behavior-10 hrs
- c. PSYC 531-Experimental Analysis of Behavior-15 hrs

Identification of Problem and Assessment (30hrs)

- a. PSYC 533-Applied Behavior Analysis-10hrs
- b. PSYC 737-Assessment and Treatment of Problem Behavior-20hrs

Intervention & Behavior Change Considerations (10 hrs)

- a. PSYC 533-Applied Behavior Analysis-10hrs

Behavior Change Systems (10 hrs)

- a. PSYC 533-Applied Behavior Analysis-5hrs
- b. PSYC 737-Assessment and Treatment of Problem Behavior-5hrs

Implementation, Management, and Supervision (10 hrs)

- a. PSYC 737-Assessment and Treatment of Problem Behavior-10hrs

E. Discretionary (30 hrs)

- a. PSYC 732-Behavior Theory and Philosophy

PSYC 630/730-Behavior Analysis Practicum

BCBA Requires a minimum of 750 hrs of supervised practica

Support for and Recognition of Students: The Legacy of Don Hake

The Don Hake Memorial Fund

A generous gift by a former student in the behavior analysis program, supplemented by gifts from other alumni and friends of the program, has provided the program an endowment to use in supporting small projects and student research. A portion of the endowment was used in 2000 to support a major international conference on the topic of behavior theory and philosophy. Since 2001, the fund has provided support for graduate students to attend the annual conventions of the Southeastern Association for Behavior Analysis, the Association for Behavior Analysis, student research projects, and various other activities in keeping with the program's mission of teaching, research, and service in behavior analysis.

Contributions may be made to the Don Hake Memorial Fund c/o the West Virginia University Foundation, PO Box 4533, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV 26504.

Click here for Information about the [West Virginia University Foundation](#)

The Don Hake Award

The Don Hake Award was established by the Psychology Department in the mid-1980s in remembrance of Professor Don Hake whose untimely death in 1982 deprived both the Department and the field of Behavior Analysis of an exceptionally talented and dedicated scientist. The award was established in 1987 to recognize those graduating Ph.D. students in the Department of Psychology whose graduate careers at WVU are exemplary: in courses, in research, in professional development, and in timely completion of requirements for the degree. The work of these students both while at WVU and thereafter set the standards to which all of our graduate students should aspire.

Links to Behavior Analysis Organizations & Journals

Organizations

[American Psychological Association Division 25 \(Behavior Analysis\)](#)

[American Psychological Association Division 28 \(Psychopharmacology & Substance Abuse\)](#)

[American Psychological Association Division 33 \(Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities\)](#)

[Association for Behavior Analysis International](#)

[Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies](#)

[Maryland Association for Behavior Analysis](#)

[Mid-American Association for Behavior Analysis](#)

[Psychonomic Society](#)

[Society for the Quantitative Analyses of Behavior](#)

[Southeastern Association for Behavior Analysis](#)

[Virginia Association for Behavior Analysis](#)

Journals

[The Analysis of Verbal Behavior](#)

[The Behavior Analyst](#)

[Behavior Analysis in Practice](#)

[Behavior and Philosophy](#)

[Behavioural Processes](#)

[Experimental and Clinical Psychopharmacology](#)

[Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis](#)

[Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior](#)

[Journal of Experimental Psychology: Animal Learning and Cognition](#) (Formerly Animal Behavior Processes)

[Learning and Behavior](#)

[Learning and Motivation](#)

[The Psychological Record](#)