2012-2013 Program Guidebook

M.A. Applied Behavior Analysis

Chicago/Los Angeles/Washington D.C.

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Department Policies and Procedures

The Chicago School Model of Education focuses on the Engaged Professional. In behavior analysis, the engaged professional is one who is strong in the philosophy, science, and application of behavior analysis. The Chicago School's Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Department strives to become the School of Choice in ABA by training applied behavior analysts who practice state-of-the-art ABA and who are strong in the science and philosophy of behavior analysis.

This guidebook is designed to provide additional details not addressed in the TCSPP Student Handbook or in the Academic Catalog for the MA in ABA. All policies in the Student Handbook, Academic Catalog, and program guidebook should be followed.

NOTE: This guidebook is subject to change. If it does, students will be notified via email and will be provided with the revised version.

Course Grading and Performance Feedback

Grades are assigned in all courses, and students can review course grades online. The ABA Faculty strives to provide rapid and detailed feedback on assignments that clearly indicates satisfactory or outstanding performance, and performance that needs work.

The Department of ABA strongly recommends that students monitor their grades continuously throughout each semester, and meet with their instructors if they are not progressing satisfactorily in their classes. Students should also meet regularly with their advisors to keep them updated on and seek help for academic or other issues that may impede progress in the program.

Professional Development Group and Academic Advisor Assignment

ABA students have an academic advisor at all times. Initially, the AB590 Professional Development (PD) Group instructor is the student's academic advisor. Later, when the student selects a Thesis Chair, that faculty member becomes the student's advisor; however, the original PD instructor typically maintains a relationship with the student and is happy to continue academic advisement along with the Thesis Chair.

Independent Study

Independent study (i.e., special-topics classes with one or a few students) can be arranged with specific faculty members in order to obtain experience and/or knowledge in a particular subject area that is not addressed in other classes during the student's course of study. See your advisor, department chair, or other faculty members for more information.

Auditing Courses

Students may request to audit a specific course, to learn about a topic or topics in a given class. Students who wish to audit a course must obtain prior approval from the instructor. These students will not be required to do homework or take quizzes or other examinations, or to write papers or perform other projects. The extent to which they do is at the instructor's discretion, and with his or her approval.

The student will receive no academic credit, and cannot register for the class subsequent to auditing it and then receive credit for it. Students who audit classes must adhere to all departmental policies on comportment and academic integrity. Violations of those policies may result in the student's permission to audit the class being revoked, and possibly referral to SAC, depending on the offense.

Academic Development Plans

An Academic Development Plan (ADP) is a supportive and constructive approach to helping students who are showing less than satisfactory academic performance, or who believe they may be heading in that direction, or who voluntarily opt for more structure to ensure their success. An ADP can be initiated by the student or by a faculty member who believes the student may benefit from an ADP. ADPs are mandatory when students are placed on academic warning or probation, or when a student receives one C or F or NC or NP. The student is responsible for meeting with his/her advisor to create an ADP when one of these grades is received, and he/she should be actively engaged in the creation of the ADP. If a student does not follow through on an ADP, he/she is referred to the Student Affairs Committee for Academic Integrity (SAC-AI). See TCSPP Student Handbook for more information on ADPs.

Departmental Academic Standards (DAS) Policy (3C/2F)

In addition to meeting the institutional Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements as outlined in the Student Handbook, Chicago School students must meet additional academic standards as set forth by their academic department. These standards are called Departmental Academic Standards (DAS).
Students are evaluated against DAS by their academic department at the end of each grading period. Students are expected to evaluate their own records and contact the department upon receipt of a grade below B- or a grade of No Pass (NP). The academic department will notify students affected by DAS in writing.

DAS Outcomes and Actions:
1. Student earns:
>   a. 1 "C" grade
>>   i. Student understands that s/he may be placed on an ADP if standards are not met in the subsequent term.

2. Student earns ANY of the following:
>   a. 1 "F" grade
>>   i. Student contacts the academic department and is placed on an ADP.
>   b. 1 "NP" grade
>>   i. Student contacts the academic department and is placed on an ADP.
>   c. 2 "C" grades
>>   i. Student contacts the academic department and is placed on an ADP.
>   d. A "C" grade plus one "F" grade or one "NP" grade
>>   i. Student contacts the academic department and is placed on an ADP.

3. Student earns ANY of the following:
>   a. Any combination of two of these designations - "F" grade/"NP" grade
>>   i. Student receives written notification from academic department and is academically dismissed.
>   b. 3 "C" grades
>>   i. Student receives written notification from academic department and is academically dismissed.
>   c. A combination of three of these designations - "C" grades/"F" grades/"NP" grades
>>   i. Student receives written notification from academic department and is academically dismissed.

Student Academic Development

Students must take charge of their own academic development. They should meet with their instructor if they are showing any signs of difficulty in progressing through a class. They should meet with their advisor if they are having difficulties in a class or are experiencing any other issues that

may impede their progression through the program. The ABA Department has procedures in place to prevent students from falling behind and to help students who have fallen behind catch up. These procedures include Academic Development Plans (ADPs), peer tutoring, help from doctoral students, etc. Students must be proactive regarding their academic success and are responsible for asking for help from their academic advisor if they need it. The academic advisor should be used as a resource for academic and professional issues, as well as personal issues that are relevant to academic and professional success.

APA Format

Students should begin using APA format for all written assignments as soon as they start the program. The APA Manual (6th Ed.) (American Psychological Association, 2009) is a required textbook for several courses and is the format used for the MA thesis; therefore, students should begin practicing APA format by using it for all written assignments in all classes, unless otherwise advised by the course instructor.

Conference Attendance

Attending conferences in behavior analysis is a crucial component of professional development that should occur from now until retirement, at least. Most behavior analysts, both experimental and applied, attend the yearly convention of our major professional organization, the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI). Applied behavior analysts also attend the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts (APBA). Experimental and applied behavior analysts also attend regional conferences, such as the Mid-American Association for Behavior Analysis (MABA) or the Southeastern Association for Behavior Analysis (SEABA), and/or state conferences, such as the California Association for Behavior Analysis (CalABA), Maryland Association (MABA), and Illinois Association for Behavior Analysis (IL-ABA). Many behavior analysts attend more specialized conferences, such as ABAI's National Autism Conference and the International Precision Teaching Conference (IPTC).

The MA in ABA program requires students to attend conferences as part of their education, training, and professional development. Students are required to attend a regional, state/local, or specialized conference during the Fall of Year 1 as part of the requirements of the AB590 Professional Development course. They are also required to attend the annual ABAI convention in May over Memorial Day weekend. Students who cannot attend ABAI can attend the APBA conference in April instead with approval from their advisor. Students who cannot attend these conferences should meet with their advisor to make other arrangements for satisfying these professional development requirements.

Conference Presentations

Students are encouraged to present their thesis data or other work at conferences. Students frequently present posters on their thesis work, but Powerpoint presentations may also be presented. Students must have a faculty advisor review and approve any submissions to conferences for which the student lists a TCSPP affiliation. The Thesis Chair and second reader must approve any submissions and final presentations of thesis data; typically, the Thesis Chair and second reader are listed as second and third authors, respectively. If a student presents on a project that is not the thesis, an ABA faculty member must approve the submission and final presentation and may be listed as an author, depending on the level of input into the presentation (see APA Manual for authorship guidelines).

Practicum

On the Chicago and DC campuses, the Practicum experience for the MA in ABA program serves two functions: 1) it fulfills the practicum requirements of the Applied Professional Practice (APP) component that is a part of most MA degree programs at TCSPP, and 2) it is designed to fulfill the

BACB supervision requirements necessary to sit for the BCBA exam. Students must follow all APP and BACB requirements in order to receive credit for the practicum experience. If there is a case where APP and BACB policies conflict, the student must follow the more stringent or conservative of the two policies and should consult with his/her academic advisor, the ABA APP Director, and the Campus APP Director to determine a course of action. Students must follow all practicum procedures as detailed in the ABA Practicum Search Manual and the ABA Practicum Placement Manual.

On the Los Angeles campus, the practicum requirements are met in a classroom setting, where each class meeting targets a specific aspect of professional practice. The instructor then assigns the students the requirement to perform those tasks taught in the work setting. Each student presents his/her assignments during the last class meeting of the semester. Students receive supervision according to group supervision requirements as part of their Supervised Independent Fieldwork designation. In this framework, students must work 1500 hours in an applied setting, with 5% (75 hours) of that receiving supervision. Half of those hours can be in group supervision. The Practicum course sequence satisfies that group requirement. As a component of the course, students are required to work or volunteer in an applied setting where a BCBA provides individual supervision according to the BACB guidelines.

Permission to Apply to Practica

See instructions in the ABA Practicum Search Manual for how to apply for a practicum (Chicago and DC campuses).

Thesis

MA students in ABA complete an empirical, behavior-analytic thesis, including thesis proposal, Institutional Review Board (IRB) application, data collection, write-up with figures, Powerpoint presentation of the thesis at thesis defense, and revision of the thesis document if necessary. The Thesis Chair serves as the primary reader and must approve all drafts of the thesis proposal and thesis document before it is reviewed by the second reader. The second reader typically suggests revisions and may request to see those revisions before the thesis or proposal goes to the next step. See ABA Thesis Manual for more information.

The ABA Department recommends that MA students start thinking about potential topics as soon as they start the program. The Research Methods class in Spring of Year 1 requires a research proposal as a major project, and it is to the student's benefit to use the research proposal for Research Methods as the basis for the thesis proposal; therefore, having a thesis topic by Spring of Year 1 is very beneficial.