2013-2014 Program Guidebook

Ph.D. in Applied Behavior Analysis
The PhD in ABA degree requires students to pass a written and oral comprehensive examination. Subject matter and course material from any and all classes in the PhD program (including MS classes) may be included on the comprehensive exam. Four Comprehensive Examination courses are included in the coursework requirements and are designed to help students prepare for the exams.
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.

The PhD in ABA program is a 5-year program that includes the MS in ABA requirements as prerequisites for the 3-year post-MS requirements. This guidebook applies to the post-MS requirements; see MS in ABA Program Guidebook for information on coursework, practicum, and other requirements at the MS level.

This guidebook is designed to provide additional details not addressed in the TCSPP Student Handbook or in the Academic Catalog for the PhD 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 may review course grades online. The ABA Faculty strives to provide rapid and detailed feedback on assignments that clearly indicates satisfactory performance and performance that needs work.

The ABA Department does not accept grades of C or F (or No Credit or No Pass) as indicating student mastery of the learning objectives associated with any course. A student who receives a grade of C or F (or No Credit or No Pass) in a core course must repeat and pass that course with a B- (or Credit or Pass) or better. A student who receives a grade of C or F in an elective course must repeat that course or a different elective and pass that course with a B- or better.

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 PA600 Professional Development (PD) instructor is the student’s academic advisor. Later, when the student selects a Dissertation 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 Dissertation 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.

**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 PhD dissertation; 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 PhD 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 PA600 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 dissertation data or other work at conferences. Students frequently present posters on their dissertation 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 TCSPPP affiliation. The Dissertation Chair and Readers must approve any submissions and final presentations of dissertation data; typically, the Dissertation Chair and readers are listed as co-authors. If a student presents on a project that is not the dissertation, 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).

**Comprehensive Examination**

The PhD in ABA degree requires students to pass a written and oral comprehensive examination. Subject matter and course material from any and all classes in the PhD program (including MS classes) may be included on the comprehensive exam. Four Comprehensive Examination courses are included in the coursework requirements and are designed to help students prepare for the exams.

At the end of the four Comprehensive Examination courses, students take the written exam, and if they pass it, they proceed to an oral defense, in which they defend their answers in front of a committee that includes at least three (Chicago campus) or at least four (LA campus) faculty members. The entire ABA faculty is invited to attend the oral defense and may participate in the grading of the written and oral exams. If the student fails the written exam, he/she must take another exam later in the program and may be required to retake one or more of the Comprehensive Exam courses. Two attempts each are allowed on the written examination and oral defense (three attempts may be allowed under extenuating circumstances and with approval by the Department Chair); students who fail one of these components twice (or three times, if allowed) will be dismissed from the program. Once the written exam and oral defense are completed successfully, the student is considered a Doctoral Candidate and is allowed to complete the Dissertation process.

Beginning in Fall 2013, students in Chicago and Los Angeles who fail to complete both comprehensive examinations will not be permitted to propose their Dissertation to the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

**Doctoral Candidates**

After satisfactorily completing both comprehensive examinations, the student files are reviewed including the status of any ADPs. Students must be clear of any comportment issues to be considered a doctoral candidate.

**Dissertation**

PhD students in ABA complete an empirical, behavior-analytic dissertation that marks an original contribution to the body of knowledge in ABA, including complete and comprehensive literature review, dissertation proposal, Powerpoint presentation of the dissertation proposal, Institutional Review Board (IRB) application, data collection, write-up with figures, Powerpoint presentation of the dissertation at dissertation defense, revision of the dissertation document if necessary, and copy-editing.
The Dissertation Chair serves as the primary reader and must approve all drafts of the dissertation proposal and dissertation document before the other reviewers receive it. In Chicago and LA, at least three readers are required; in LA, the third reader must be a doctoral-level individual who is not a core faculty member of the ABA faculty on the student’s campus. The dissertation readers typically suggest revisions and may request to see those revisions before the dissertation or proposal goes to the next step. See ABA Dissertation Manual for more information.

Beginning in Fall 2013, the student may only propose the dissertation after having completed the comprehensive examinations.

Six dissertation classes are included in the PhD in ABA coursework requirements: one 3-credit Proposal Development Seminar followed by five 2-credit Dissertation Development courses. Students must be enrolled in Proposal Development, Dissertation Development, or Dissertation Maintenance while working on their dissertation. The dissertation must be empirical research that makes an original contribution to the scientific knowledge base of Behavior Analysis. The ABA Department recommends that PhD students start thinking about potential topics as soon as they start the program to facilitate timely completion of the dissertation process.