



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Graduate Program Handbook 2026 - 2027

Human Factors & Cognitive Psychology PhD Program

Reference this handbook to learn about the unique policies, requirements, procedures, resources, and norms for graduate students in the Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD Program



Letter of Welcome

Welcome to the Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology (HFC) PhD Program! You are about to embark on a great intellectual adventure, one that will be demanding but, we hope, rewarding. You will find many opportunities to self-actualize in this program. Be sure you maintain your focus to learn as much as you can about psychological theory and research, both in the classroom and especially in your laboratory research with your Faculty Advisor.

Like most rigorous PhD programs in psychology, HFC follows the apprenticeship model, in which the student works closely with a Faculty Advisor and is trained in research and scholarship. Our program also follows the APA 'scientist- practitioner' model, in which the goal is to train our graduates in the science of human factors and cognitive psychology and to train them to apply the science to improve human-technology interaction.

Like most things in life, how much you gain from graduate school varies directly with how much effort you put into it. If you work hard, remain focused on your research program with your Faculty Advisor, and make the most of the opportunities in our program, you will do well both at UCF and after graduation.

Good luck in your scholarly endeavors,

Mustapha Mouloua, PhD
Professor
Director,
Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD

And

Joseph Schmidt, PhD
Associate Professor
Associate Director,
Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD

Table of Contents

Letter of Welcome	2
Table of Contents.....	3
How to Use This Handbook.....	9
Who to Contact for Questions	9
<i>Graduate Program Staff.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Directors of Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Graduate Student Services.....</i>	<i>10</i>
Contact List.....	10
Admissions	12
<i>Overview</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Application Requirements and Review</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Faculty Mentoring.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Admission Timeline</i>	<i>13</i>
Onboarding.....	15
<i>Orientations</i>	<i>15</i>
Department and Program Orientations	15
UCF Grad Launch Orientation Experience.....	15
Orientation Hold	16
<i>New Student Training</i>	<i>16</i>
Pressure to Plagiarize.....	16
Graduate Teaching Training	17
Supporting Students in Distress Training	17
Research Compliance Training (CITI).....	17
Further Information	17
HFC Program Overview	18
<i>Complete Name of Degree</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>College</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Department.....</i>	<i>18</i>

<i>Program Type</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Program Website</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Program Email</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Year of Program Inception</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>The Field of Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Mission Statement</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Program Accreditation</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Full-Time Program Requirement.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Program Cost and Fees</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Student Expectations</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Faculty Advisor.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Career Pathways.....</i>	<i>23</i>
Degree Requirements	24
<i>Required Courses (29 total credits):.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Required Directed Research (9 total credits):</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Required Dissertation (15 total credits)</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Approved Elective Courses (21-22 total credits):</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Master's Along the Way</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Transfer Coursework.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Program of Study</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Procedures and Timelines.....</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Completion Timeline</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Restricted Registration</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Correct Course Prefix.....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Withdrawal Process</i>	<i>32</i>
Competency Requirements.....	33
<i>Purpose</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Procedures</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Competency Material Deadlines.....</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Domain 1: Research Deadlines.....</i>	<i>34</i>

Domain 2: Teaching and/or Professional Presentation Deadlines	34
Domain 1: Research	35
<i>First Year Project</i>	35
Summary and Contributions Abstract	35
Manuscript	35
Presentation	36
Evaluation Outcomes	38
<i>Second Year Project</i>	38
Summary and Contributions Abstract	38
Manuscript	39
Presentation	40
Evaluation Outcomes	41
<i>Literature Review</i>	41
Evaluation Outcomes	42
<i>First Author Published/Publishable Journal Article</i>	42
Evaluation Outcomes	43
Domain 2: Teaching and/or Professional Presentations.....	44
<i>Reporting Activities</i>	44
<i>Point System</i>	44
<i>Teaching</i>	45
<i>Professional Presentations</i>	46
Doctoral Candidacy.....	47
<i>Overview</i>	47
<i>Eligibility</i>	47
<i>Dissertation Advisory Committee</i>	47
Composition	47
Approval Process.....	47
<i>Graduate Faculty Scholar</i>	48
<i>Notification of Passing Candidacy</i>	48
<i>Enrollment in Dissertation Hours</i>	48
<i>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</i>	49
Doctoral Dissertation	50

<i>Overview</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Chronological Guide and Required Materials</i>	<i>50</i>
IRB Study Closure	50
Proposal	51
Intent to Graduate	52
TD Release Option (iThenticate)	52
Format Review	53
Defense Announcement	54
Dissertation Defense	55
Dissertation Approval Forms.....	55
Final Submission of the Dissertation	55
Graduate Teaching Assistantships	57
<i>Overview</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Eligibility.....</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Appointments.....</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Workload</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Tuition Waivers</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Assignments.....</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Required Training and Materials</i>	<i>58</i>
Teaching Qualification	59
Versant English Speaking and Listening Test	59
<i>GTA Performance Assessments</i>	<i>59</i>
Funding and Professional Development.....	61
<i>Fellowships.....</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>Research Funding and Training Opportunities.....</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Travel Awards and Conference Support.....</i>	<i>62</i>
Department and Program Travel Support	63
External Travel Funding.....	63
<i>Conference Awards</i>	<i>63</i>
<i>University Awards</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>UCF's Access to Opportunities</i>	<i>64</i>
Travel & Procurement Procedures.....	66

<i>Travel Requests</i>	66
<i>Non-Travel Purchases</i>	68
Program & Institutional Policies	69
<i>Absences</i>	69
<i>Changing Your Faculty Advisor</i>	69
<i>Communication</i>	70
<i>Continuous Enrollment</i>	70
<i>Harassment</i>	71
<i>Incomplete Grades</i>	72
<i>Non-Discrimination & Accommodations Compliance</i>	72
<i>Requesting Accommodations</i>	73
<i>Professional Conduct/Ethics Statement</i>	73
<i>Program GPA</i>	74
<i>Special Leave of Absence</i>	74
<i>7-Year Rule and Completion Plan</i>	75
Academic Performance	77
<i>HFC Student Annual Review</i>	77
<i>Academic Progress Review</i>	77
<i>Retention Plans</i>	77
<i>Academic Probation</i>	79
<i>Dismissal</i>	80
<i>Readmission</i>	80
Student Academic Appeals	82
<i>Grade Appeals</i>	82
<i>Academic Program Appeals</i>	83
Student Support Services	84
<i>Graduate Student Center (GSC)</i>	84
<i>Student Health Services</i>	84
<i>Recreation and Wellness Center</i>	84

<i>Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)</i>	84
<i>Accessibility Services (SAS)</i>	84
<i>UCF Career Services</i>	84
<i>Student Legal Services</i>	85
<i>UCF Global (International and Scholar Services)</i>	85
Research Labs	86
<i>Adult Development and Decision Lab (ADD)</i>	86
<i>Applied Cognition and Aging Lab (ACAL)</i>	86
<i>Applied Cognition and Technology Lab (ACAT)</i>	87
<i>Attention and Memory Lab</i>	87
<i>Technology, Humans, and Environment Lab (THE)</i>	87
<i>The Law, Applied Memory, and Psychology Lab (LAMP)</i>	88
<i>Minds in Technology, Machines in Thought Lab (MIT²)</i>	88
<i>Performance Research Lab (PeRL)</i>	88
<i>Team Performance Lab (TPL)</i>	89
<i>Transportation Research Group (TRG)</i>	89
<i>Virtual Avatar and Agent Interaction Lab (VAAIL)</i>	89
<i>Other Research Opportunities</i>	90
UCF IMMERSE	90
Institute for Simulation and Training (IST)	90
Faculty and Staff	92
<i>Faculty</i>	92
Greenspan, Rachel, PhD	92
Hancock, Peter, D.Sc., PhD	93
Jentsch, Florian, PhD	93
Kocur, Martin, PhD	94
Lighthall, Nichole, PhD	94
Mouloua, Mustapha, PhD	95
Neider, Mark, PhD	95
Sarno, Dawn, PhD	96
Schmidt, Joseph, PhD	96
Sims, Valerie, PhD	97

Szalma, James, PhD	98
Staff.....	99
Tummons, Liz	99
Program Notes.....	100
<i>Stay Informed and Proactive</i>	100
<i>Be Familiar with UCF Policies</i>	100
<i>Check Your Email</i>	100
<i>Attend Every Class and Come Prepared</i>	100
<i>Engage in Research and Professional Development</i>	101
<i>Embrace Your Role as a Professional</i>	101
<i>Maintain Professionalism in Every Interaction</i>	101
<i>When in Doubt, Ask</i>	101
<i>Advice for the Journey Ahead</i>	102
Useful Links	103
<i>Academic Calendar</i>	103
<i>Awards and Recognition</i>	103
<i>Counseling and Psychological Services</i>	103
<i>CGS Forms and References</i>	103
<i>CGS Graduate Catalog</i>	103
<i>CGS Graduate Teaching</i>	103
<i>CGS Thesis and Dissertation</i>	104
<i>COS Restricted Registration</i>	104
<i>Department of Psychology</i>	104
<i>Financial Aid Guide</i>	104
<i>HFES Student Chapter</i>	104
<i>Office of Nondiscrimination and Accommodations Compliance</i>	104
<i>Student Accessibility Services</i>	104
<i>UCF Global</i>	104
<i>Office of Graduate Services</i>	105

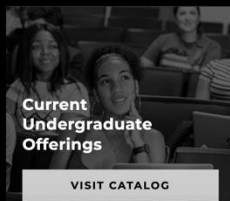
<i>MyUCF</i>	105
<i>UCF Graduate Guide</i>	105
<i>UCF Library</i>	105
<i>University Writing Center</i>	105

Navigating Policy and Resources at the University of Central Florida

This handbook is one of many sources to consult as you become familiar with the policies, procedures, requirements, resources, and norms of graduate education at the University of Central Florida.

ACADEMIC CATALOGS

These online catalogs can help you quickly locate and save details about our undergraduate and graduate programs. Whether you are a prospective student or already enrolled, you can easily see what the University of Central Florida has to offer!



THE GOLDEN RULE STUDENT HANDBOOK

STUDENT LIFE

ORLANDO, FL | 73°F

Student Handbook

Knight Life at UCF

Don't just go to college — get the most out of it. At UCF, you'll have many ways to get involved inside and outside of the classroom. From application to graduation, you'll be inspired to do amazing things. So whether you prefer academics and research or campus activities and athletics, we'll provide you with the tools and support you need to find your place and foster your purpose.

Discover your next adventure at UCF.

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

Understanding Your Graduate Experience

UCF Regulations

Pathways to Success

Personal and Professional Development Opportunities

HOME NOTICE ARCHIVES SUBSCRIBE TO NOTIFICATIONS UCF POLICIES

Chapter 5: Students

How to Use This Handbook

The Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD Program Handbook is your go-to guide for navigating life in the program. Think of it as a practical field guide you can turn to whenever questions come up - whether you're planning coursework, tracking academic milestones, understanding program expectations, or looking for resources and opportunities to support your success.

Inside you'll find clear, program-specific information about degree requirements, timelines, policies, and academic standards, along with guidance to help you stay organized and confident as you move through the program. For added convenience, a comprehensive list of helpful links - ranging from the academic calendar to registration forms - is included in the final pages of this handbook. We encourage you to refer to the handbook often and keep it close as a trusted resource throughout your graduate experience.

The [UCF Graduate Catalog](#) is the University's official record of graduate policies. In any case where this handbook appears to disagree, the Graduate Catalog is the final authority.

Students may also find the [UCF Graduate Guide](#) to be a helpful supplemental resource. While it is not an official policy document, it provides practical guidance on navigating graduate education at UCF, including tips, resources, and general information that may complement the content found in this handbook and the Graduate Catalog.

Who to Contact for Questions

Many of your questions about how to meet expectations and thrive as a graduate student will be answered by the various sources of policies, procedures, requirements, resources, and norms listed in this document. Several key positions in this department and on campus are ready to answer your remaining questions:

Graduate Program Staff

Each graduate program will have at least one department staff person typically called a Program Coordinator who serves as a point person for program policy and procedures. Program coordinators are well versed in most elements of graduate education that extend beyond academic instruction in your program and will likely be

your first stop for questions related to anything in this handbook.

Directors of Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology

The Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD program is led by two Program Directors who oversee the program's academic policies, structure, and student progress. Program Directors serve as a resource for questions related to program requirements, academic standing, and formal program decisions. Students are typically referred to the Program Directors when questions extend beyond routine advising or administrative support provided by the Faculty Advisor or Program Coordinator.

Graduate Student Services

The College of Graduate Studies Student Services provides centralized support for graduate students, including assistance with policies and procedures, graduation and thesis/dissertation requirements, fellowships and funding opportunities, and academic standing. Students can refer to the [CGS website](#) for official guidelines, deadlines, and additional resources.

Contact List

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Admissions

The Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology (HFC) PhD Program at the University of Central Florida welcomes applications from highly motivated students who are interested in advanced research and training at the intersection of psychology, technology, and human-centered design. This section is intended to provide prospective students with an overview of what the program looks for in applicants and how the admissions process works.

Overview

Admission to the Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD Program is competitive and based on a holistic review of each applicant's academic background, research interests, and potential for success in doctoral-level study. The program seeks students whose interests align with the research strengths of the faculty and who demonstrate strong preparation for rigorous graduate training.

Application Requirements and Review

In addition to meeting the general application requirements of the UCF College of Graduate Studies, applicants to the Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD Program should hold a degree in psychology or a closely related field (including but not limited to computer science, or engineering). Successful applicants typically demonstrate a strong foundation in experimental psychology, including prior undergraduate coursework in statistics and core experimental areas.

While each applicant's academic background is evaluated individually, students are generally not admitted without evidence of foundational preparation in experimental research. This preparation usually includes approximately 18 semester hours of relevant coursework, such as research methods, statistical methods, computer applications, and general experimental psychology topics including learning, physiological psychology, perception, cognition, motivation, and psychological measurement and/or relevant demonstrated research related work (i.e., academic conference presentations or publications based on research you were involved in).

A complete application includes official academic transcripts, a curriculum vitae (CV) or résumé, a personal statement, and 3 letters of recommendation. Applications are reviewed by the program's admissions committee and faculty. While all materials are considered, particular attention is given to research and laboratory experience

relevant to human factors and cognitive psychology. Collectively, these components help the program assess an applicant's readiness for doctoral-level training and alignment with the research focus of the HFC program.

All application materials must reflect the applicant's own original work. The use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools to draft or substantially modify application materials is not permitted and may result in disqualification from consideration.

Faculty Mentoring

Prospective students are strongly encouraged to review [faculty research](#) interests and meet with potential [faculty mentors](#) prior to applying. While applicants are not able to secure a faculty mentor before admission, identifying potential faculty members, articulating your research interests and how they fit with specific faculty/labs will help you tailor your materials and strengthen your application.

Admission Timeline

The HFC program admits students once per year. Applications are reviewed annually for a single cohort beginning in the fall semester. Domestic applications are due December 1, and the international deadline is November 1.

All applications are evaluated through a comprehensive review conducted by the program's admissions committee and program faculty during the official review period, which occurs after the December 1 application deadline. To ensure fairness and equity in the admissions process, faculty are not permitted to formally review application materials (e.g., CVs, transcripts, statements) prior to this official review period.

Following the program review process, final admissions decisions are issued by the College of Graduate Studies, which communicates decisions to applicants by email. The earliest date our admissions process can be completed is April 15. We aim to notify all applicants of final decisions by or around this date each year.

While applicants are encouraged to submit complete materials early, the program does not conduct priority or rolling admissions. All completed applications received by the deadline are reviewed together as part of the same admissions cycle.

Applicants are encouraged to consult the HFC program and College of Graduate Studies websites for official deadlines and application requirements.

Onboarding

Orientations

Department and Program Orientations

The week before classes begin in your first Fall semester, the Psychology Department will host an orientation for all new graduate students. On the same day, the HFC program typically holds a separate session focused on program-specific information. Details for both orientations will be sent to your UCF email in advance. If you have any questions about orientation, please contact the program at HFC@ucf.edu

UCF Grad Launch Orientation Experience

All incoming doctoral degree-seeking students are required to complete the College of Graduate Studies' [Grad Launch](#) orientation experience. You will gain access approximately one week after accepting your offer of admission and must complete them before the end of your first semester. The modules take approximately 45-60 minutes to complete. A \$35 Orientation fee is applied to all incoming students in degree seeking programs.

Phase One: The Essentials (Required)

Phase One consists of interactive online modules that must be completed as part of required onboarding. These modules introduce key topics including academic integrity, university policies, campus resources, and expectations for graduate study.

- Modules are accessed through [Webcourses](#)
- Access becomes available after accepting your offer of admission
- Required components must be completed before the end of your first term

Access to the online modules requires a valid UCF NID (network identification) and NID password. The NID serves as the student's secure sign-on for multiple UCF systems, including Grad Launch and myUCF. Students can obtain their NID by visiting [myUCF](#), selecting Sign On, choosing What is my NID, and following the instructions to create a password.

Phase Two: Live Orientation (Optional)

The second phase offers an optional opportunity for students to connect with fellow graduate students and learn about the resources that support the UCF graduate experience. Live Orientation sessions are offered in both in-person and virtual formats and may include guided campus tours that highlight what makes UCF an exceptional place for doctoral study. Refreshments are provided at on-campus sessions.

Phase Three: Semester Takeoff (Optional)

Students are encouraged to kick off their first term by participating in Semester Takeoff events. These optional celebrations bring together new and returning Graduate Knights for networking, campus exploration, and community-building activities. Complimentary refreshments are offered at many events.

Orientation Hold

An orientation hold is placed on all incoming doctoral student accounts. This hold is satisfied by completing the required Grad Launch online module and by paying the mandatory orientation fee. The orientation hold is applied to the student's second semester of enrollment. This allows students adequate time to complete the required modules and submit the orientation fee either before the start of their first semester or after funding is disbursed during that initial semester.

Students who do not complete the required orientation components or pay the orientation fee will be unable to register for future semesters.

New Student Training

Pressure to Plagiarize

All incoming graduate students are required to complete the Pressures to Plagiarize Webcourse prior to the end of their first semester of coursework. This course will be added to your [Webcourses](#) dashboard by the end of the first week of classes. A hold will be added to your [MyUCF](#) student account once you are admitted to the course. The hold will be removed upon completion of the course.

Graduate Teaching Training

To be eligible for appointments as a Graduate Teaching Associate, Assistant, or Grader (GTA), students must complete all required training modules by the designated semester deadline. This requirement is mandatory, and exceptions are not permitted. For additional details, refer to the Graduate Teaching Assistantships section of this handbook .

Supporting Students in Distress Training

This is required for all student employees and focuses on mental health and suicide prevention. Register for this training through [Workday](#). This requirement is monitored by Human Resources and not the College of Graduate Studies. For questions about this training, please contact the Human Resources Business Center associated with their college or hiring department.

Research Compliance Training (CITI)

HFC Graduate students must complete the [Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative](#) (CITI) course for Group 2: Social/Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel. This training ensures compliance with federal and institutional research standards. Students should complete this module prior to engaging in any research activities involving human subjects.

Further Information

Prior to starting your first semester, you will receive an email with a tutorial on how to register for classes, along with other helpful information.

HFC Program Overview

Complete Name of Degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology

College

College of Sciences

Department

Department of Psychology

Program Type

Doctoral

Program Website

[Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD](#)

Program Email

HFC@ucf.edu

Year of Program Inception

The Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD Program was established in 1988, marking the beginning of UCF's long-standing commitment to graduate education and research in human factors and ergonomics.

The Field of Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology

Human factors and cognitive psychology are closely related, interdisciplinary fields focused on understanding how people think, process information, and interact with the systems and environments around them. Cognitive psychology examines fundamental mental processes such as attention, perception, memory, and decision-making, while human factors applies this knowledge to the design of systems, technologies, and environments to improve performance, safety, and usability.

Across the field, researchers emphasize the connection between understanding human cognition and applying that knowledge to real-world challenges - designing tools, systems, and environments that align with human capabilities while reducing error and supporting effective performance.

As interdisciplinary fields, human factors and cognitive psychology overlap with areas such as engineering psychology, cognitive science, neuroscience, ergonomics, industrial and organizational psychology, human-computer interaction, and computer science. Researchers and practitioners draw from these areas to study behavior in both controlled settings and complex, real-world environments.

Applications span a wide range of domains, including transportation, healthcare, aviation, simulation and training, automation, and emerging technologies. Research and practice in these fields address topics such as attention, decision-making, human-AI interaction, perception, physiological responses, human error, workload, training, and system design, with the goal of improving how people interact with technology and complex systems.

Mission Statement

A PhD professional degree track in Human Factors & Cognitive Psychology is offered to those with a baccalaureate or master's degree in psychology or an allied area. The track seeks to develop the capacity to design, conduct, and apply applied experimental and human factors research in a variety of professional settings. It is patterned on the scientist-practitioner model of the [American Psychological Association](#) (APA) and adheres to guidelines established by the committee for Education and Training of APA's Division 21 (Applied Experimental and Engineering Psychology).

Students receive training in the content and techniques of human factors psychology - including statistical and quantitative procedures, experimental design, survey methods, computer techniques, and other research methodologies. Students also select a concentration area, which they complete as part of their required elective coursework. Examples include human-computer interaction, human-machine-environment interface,

human performance, human factors in simulation and training, cognitive neuroscience, or other areas of interest with Faculty Advisor authorization. In addition to the course requirements students must demonstrate their knowledge and skills by completing five professional activities within two competency domains. Finally, a dissertation representing a significant research contribution to the field is required.

Consistent with the Department's [Mission Statement](#), the HFC Program's overall goals are to:

- Train and educate leaders in Psychology at the doctoral level within the scientist-practitioner tradition
- Facilitate the exploration and understanding of the complexity of human behavior while expanding our collective knowledge base through multiple avenues (e.g., publications in scientific journals, conference presentations, teaching)
- Strive to improve the health and quality of life of individuals through excellence in education as well as in research and practice in human-technology interaction.

The overall philosophy that drives these goals is embodied in the policy statement that emerged from the National Conference on Scientist-Practitioner Education and Training for the Professional Practice of Psychology held in Gainesville, Florida on January 16- 20, 1990. The training model of the HFC program reflects our efforts to educate students so that they can advance psychological knowledge through research and scholarship, and to evaluate the impact of training regimens and interface designs using empirically derived methods and procedures. The model also strives to help students learn how to think critically and scientifically about problems while invoking the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct.

The overall philosophy of the training program is consistent with that of the Mission Statement of the Department, the College of Sciences, the Graduate School, and the University.

Program Accreditation

The Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD Program has maintained accreditation by the [Human Factors and Ergonomics Society](#) (HFES) since 2011.

HFES is the leading professional organization for individuals working in human factors, ergonomics, and related disciplines. HFES supports the advancement of the field by promoting research, best practices, and collaboration across academic, industry, and government settings.

For graduate students, HFES provides valuable opportunities for professional development, networking, and career preparation. Students are encouraged to engage with HFES through conference participation, research presentations, and involvement in student chapters. These experiences allow students to connect with professionals in the field, gain exposure to current research and industry trends, and develop skills in scientific communication and professional engagement.

Full-Time Program Requirement

The Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD program is a full-time, in-person program that requires active engagement in coursework, research, and collaborative activities. The program is rigorous and research-intensive, with an emphasis on hands-on training and sustained involvement in lab work and applied projects.

Students are expected to maintain full-time status and dedicate sufficient time to their academic and research responsibilities. While outside employment is not prohibited, it will necessarily decrease the time you can spend building your CV, which may delay graduation and make you less competitive after graduation. Because of this, it is strongly recommended that students limit employment to no more than 20 hours per week to maintain progress and fully engage with the program.

To support students financially, the program typically offers university-based employment through Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) or Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) appointments. These positions are generally structured to be 20 hours per week and are designed to complement students' academic and professional development.

Program Cost and Fees

The Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD program is designed as a fully funded doctoral program. Program costs plus a small stipend are typically provided through tuition waivers, which are most often supported by graduate teaching assistantships (GTAs), graduate research assistantships (GRAs), or other institutional funding. As a result, the program generally does not admit students who intend to self-fund their doctoral education.

Students should note that certain university fees and personal expenses are not covered by tuition waivers and remain the responsibility of the student. Additional information regarding tuition, required fees, and cost-of-attendance estimates is

available through the [Home - College of Graduate Studies](#) and the [Office of Student Financial Assistance](#).

Student Expectations

Students in the HFC program are expected to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to function independently as researchers and professionals in human factors and cognitive psychology. This includes the ability to design, conduct, and communicate original research, as well as critically evaluate and apply existing theory.

Throughout the program, students build expertise through coursework, research, and applied experiences, contributing to the field through scholarly presentations and publications while developing the skills needed to address real-world problems involving human interaction with technology and complex systems.

As students progress through the program and advance to doctoral candidacy, they are expected to demonstrate increasing independence, scholarly engagement, and professional responsibility. This includes taking initiative in research, maintaining consistent progress toward degree milestones, and actively contributing to the academic and professional community.

Students are also expected to maintain regular communication with their Faculty Advisor, engage in collaborative and respectful professional relationships, and uphold the ethical standards of the discipline. These expectations are supported through close mentorship and collaboration with Faculty Advisors, who play a central role in guiding students' academic and professional development.

For university-level policies regarding student responsibilities, students should refer to the [UCF Graduate Catalog](#)

Faculty Advisor

As students begin to explore potential career pathways in human factors and cognitive psychology, the Faculty Advisor plays a central role in helping translate those goals into a structured academic and research plan.

Each student is assigned a Faculty Advisor whose expertise aligns with their research interests. The Faculty Advisor serves as the primary mentor throughout the program, guiding the development of research skills, professional identity, and long-term career direction. Students are expected to meet with their Faculty Advisor regularly to discuss

academic progress, research development, and evolving professional goals.

Faculty Advisors support students in navigating the program and preparing for future careers by:

- Assisting in the development of knowledge and research competence within the field
- Serving as chair of the dissertation committee and evaluating progress at key milestones
- Supporting academic planning, including course selection and degree progression
- Helping identify research opportunities, collaborators, and committee members
- Providing guidance on professional development, including conferences, publications, and career preparation

Both the student and Faculty Advisor are responsible for maintaining clear communication and shared expectations. Students are encouraged to engage regularly with their Faculty Advisor to ensure alignment of academic progress and professional development goals.

Career Pathways

Graduates pursue careers across diverse sectors, including industry, government, and academia, with roles in user experience (UX) research, human-systems integration, simulation and training, transportation, healthcare, aerospace, and emerging technologies.

Historically, nearly all students secure full-time employment prior to graduation, reflecting the strong applied focus and high demand for human factors expertise. Alumni hold positions at peer academic institutions and leading organizations such as Embry Riddle, Clemson University, NASA, Amazon, Walt Disney World and Lockheed Martin, as well as in government and defense sectors, including roles with the U.S. Navy and Army. Some graduates also pursue consulting and expert witnessing, applying their expertise to legal cases involving human performance, safety, and system design.

Degree Requirements

The Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD Program requires students to complete a minimum of 74 credit hours beyond the baccalaureate degree, including the following required courses. Students are required to achieve a minimum grade of B- in each core curriculum course and maintain a GPA of at least 3.0.

Required Courses (29 total credits):

- EXP 5256 – Human Factors I (3)
- EXP 6257 - Human Factors II (3)
- EXP 6258 - Human Factors III (3)
- EXP 5208 - Sensation and Perception (3)
- EXP 6506 - Human Cognition and Learning (3)
- EXP 6541 - Advanced Human Computer Interaction (3)
- PSY 7217C - Advanced Research Methodology I (4)
- PSY 7218C - Advanced Research Methodology II (4)

Complete at least 1 of the following:

- PSB 6328 - Psychophysiology (3)
- PSB 6348 - The Neuroanatomical Basis of Psychological Function (3)

Required Directed Research (9 total credits):

- EXP 6918 - Directed Research

Required Dissertation (15 total credits)

- PSY 7980 - Doctoral Dissertation

Approved Elective Courses (21-22 total credits):

Students should choose electives in concentrated course groupings: for example, human-machine systems, performance measurement and evaluation, simulation and training, or quantitative methods. Other elective course groupings may be developed for the student's specific interests. Students may choose to satisfy these elective requirements by taking courses outside of the Psychology Department that can serve their multidisciplinary needs. If a student chooses to do so, they must document the course variation within their Program of Study.

Courses outside of the Department that have already been approved as electives are contained in the list below. A student who wishes to use courses that are not included on this list may seek approval by petitioning the HFC committee through their Faculty Advisor. Students may take an additional 15 credit hours of Directed Research to count towards electives. Students may enroll in additional Directed Research credits beyond the required 9 core and 15 elective credits; however, these additional credits will not count toward degree requirements. Electives may include but are not limited to the following courses:

- DEP 5057 - Developmental Psychology (3)
- DIG 6432 - Transmedia Story Creation (3)
- EIN 5248 - Ergonomics (3)
- EIN 5251 - Usability Engineering (3)
- EIN 5255C - Interactive Simulation (3)
- EME 6613 - Instructional System Design (3)
- EME 6614 - Instructional Game Design for Training and Education (3)
- EXP 5254 - Human Factors and Aging (3)
- IDS 6916 - Simulation Research Methods and Practicum (3)
- IDS 6146 - Modeling and Simulation Systems (3)
- IDS 6147 - Perspectives on Modeling and Simulation (3)
- DIG 5875C - Introduction to Modeling and Simulation (3)
- IDS 6148 - Human Systems Integration for Modeling and Simulation (3)
- IDS 6149 - Modeling and Simulation for Test and Evaluation (3)
- INP 7310 - Organizational Psychology I (3)
- PSB 6328 - Psychophysiology (3)
- PSB 6348 - The Neuroanatomical Basis of Psychological Function (3)
- PSB 6352 - Neuroimaging Design and Analysis Methods (3)
- PSB 7349 - Advanced Topics in Cognitive Neuroscience (3)
- SPS 5605 - Building and Improving Relationship and Emotional Intelligence (3)

- SOP 5059 - Advanced Social Psychology (3)
- EXP 6116 - Visual Performance (3)
- EXP 6255 - Human Performance (3)
- PSY 7219C - Advanced Research Methodology III (4)
- EXP 6939 - Teaching Seminar (3)
- EXP 6918 - Directed Research (1-15; in addition to the required 9 credits)

Master's Along the Way

As part of the HFC program, students entering may also earn a non-terminal Master's degree in Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology enroute to the PhD by completing all required coursework (29 total credits) and at least one additional credit hour of directed research totaling at least 30 credit hours. To fulfill the independent learning requirement, students must complete and pass both components of the First Year Project (manuscript and presentation). Students are required to achieve a minimum grade of B- in each core curriculum course and maintain at least a 3.0 GPA.

Students may pursue a master's along the way (MAW) in the same discipline as the master's degree earned prior to admission to the doctoral program. However, credits from the previously earned master's degree may not be used to satisfy requirements for both the PhD and MAW.

Because transfer credits from a previously earned degree may only be applied toward one additional degree, they are typically used to satisfy elective requirements within the PhD program. Students are encouraged to consult with their Faculty Advisor and Program Leadership early in the program to determine the most effective strategy for applying transfer credits.

Transfer Coursework

Receipt of a graduate degree from UCF indicates that a student has completed most of their graduate training through classroom, research, and practical experiences at UCF and that the graduate training they received reflects current knowledge in the field. The program faculty have the responsibility of ensuring graduate program quality by reviewing transfer credit requests, including courses taken at external institutions or at UCF prior to admission in the graduate program.

Students should request credit transfers when creating a Program of Study (POS) during their first semester of enrollment (i.e., their admit term). Transfer credit requests

are made to the student's Faculty Advisor, who initiates a review by program faculty. This review includes evaluation of the student's transcript and the associated syllabi to determine if the transfer course(s) are equivalent to the course(s) required by the program. Required course syllabi will require an additional review by faculty with relevant expertise to determine equivalency. The POS must then be submitted by the Program Coordinator to the College of Graduate Studies for review and approval. Please see the Transfer Credit policy for more information.

The following limits apply to transfer requests:

The total number of transfer credits cannot exceed 50% of the UCF degree requirements, and at least 15 credit hours of graded (A-F) courses must be taken at UCF once admitted.

Only graduate-level courses taken post-baccalaureate with a grade of 'B' or higher can be transferred. No Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory or Pass/Fail courses can transfer. Internal transfer courses (i.e., courses taken at UCF) will appear as a graded course on the transcript.

Courses older than 7 years cannot be transferred unless they have been reviewed and approved by a formal committee comprised of graduate faculty in the program. Program-level approvals must be accompanied by statements demonstrating the currency of the course content in the context of the student's experience. The course must then be approved by the dean of the College of Sciences. All other transfer policies apply. Approved courses are valid if the student maintains continuous enrollment in the graduate program. If the student is readmitted after discontinuation or dismissal, the student must initiate a new transfer request for courses older than 7 years.

Graduate students recruited to transfer to UCF when their faculty supervisor is being hired by UCF from another institution may transfer up to 2/3 of the total degree requirements if all other transfer requirements are met. In this case, the student's transfer must be requested by the faculty supervisor being hired by UCF (rather than initiated by the student). This exception still requires the student to complete the following at UCF: a minimum of 9 hours of graded coursework, the requirements for Doctoral Candidacy, and a minimum of 15 hours of dissertation credits.

Program of Study

A Program of Study (POS) is a listing of coursework agreed to by the student and the

degree program specifying course degree requirements. A specific Program of Study, which may vary from student to student, must be formulated jointly by the student and their Faculty Advisor and approved by the College of Graduate Studies. It must comply with the student's relevant catalog.

Procedures and Timelines

A POS Docusign form will be initiated by the Program Coordinator. This form will be routed to the student, Faculty Advisor, and the Program Directors for review and signature. After approval, the Program Coordinator will file the document with the College of Graduate Studies by the end of the student's first semester.

An up-to-date Program of Study must be on file prior to a student's transition to Doctoral Candidacy. If any coursework taken during the program differs from what is listed in the approved POS, the College of Graduate Studies will reject the candidacy status until a corrected POS form is submitted. Students can review Programs of Study through their myUCF account and are solely responsible for ensuring its accuracy and timely updates.

Students are recommended to meet with the Program Coordinator within the first two weeks of each semester to confirm that their Program of Study is accurate.

Completion Timeline

The PhD is designed to be obtained in 5 years of full-time study from the baccalaureate level and in 3 years from the master's level. (A minimum of one-year full-time student status is required.) If a student anticipates a deviation from this schedule, they should consult with their Faculty Advisor as well as the Program Directors.

A full-time degree-seeking graduate student must take at least 9 credit hours in the fall and spring semesters. During the summer term, full-time is 6 credit hours. A minimum of 3 credits per semester of dissertation credits is required until the minimum required 15 total is met, and then as low as 1 credit per semester can be taken until the semester in which the dissertation is successfully defended.

First Year of Graduate Training

Fall: Required Coursework • EXP 6506 Human Cognition & Learning (3) • PSY 7217C Advanced Research Methodology I (4) • EXP 6918 Directed Research (3) Research • Start 1st Year Project	Spring: Required Coursework • EXP 5208 Sensation & Perception (3) • PSY 7218C Advanced Research Methodology II (4) • EXP 6918 Directed Research (3) Research • Continue 1st Year Project	Summer: Recommended Coursework • EXP 6939 Teaching Seminar (3) AND EXP 6918 Directed Research (3) • OR EXP 6918 Directed Research (6) Research • Complete 1st Year Project
Semester Total: 10	Semester Total: 10	Semester Total: 6

Second Year of Graduate Training

Entered the Program on an EVEN Year

Fall: Required Coursework • EXP 5256 Human Factors I (3) • EXP 6541 Advanced Human-Computer Interaction (3) Recommended Coursework • PSY 7219C Advanced Research Methodology III (4) Research • 1st Year Project Manuscript & Presentation • Start 2nd Year Project	Spring: Required Coursework • EXP 6257 Human Factors II (3) • PSB 6348 The Neuroanatomical Basis of Psychological Functions (3)^a • EXP 6918 Directed Research (3) Research • Continue 2nd Year Project Recommended Research • Submit First Author Journal Article (prior to candidacy)	Summer: Recommended Coursework • Elective (3) AND EXP 6918 Directed Research (3) • OR EXP 6918 Directed Research (6) Research • Complete 2nd Year Project Recommended Research • Submit First Author Journal Article (prior to candidacy)
Semester Total: 9	Semester Total: 9	Semester Total: 6

^a You may take this to satisfy the PhD and MAW course requirements. If you use PSB 6328 Psychophysiology to satisfy this requirement, then you may replace PSB 6348 with a three-credit elective.

Second Year of Graduate Training

Entered the Program on an ODD Year

Fall: Required Coursework • EXP 5256 Human Factors I (3) • EXP 6541 Advanced Human-Computer Interaction (3) Recommended Coursework • PSY 7219C Advanced Research Methodology III (4) Research • 1yr Project Manuscript & Presentation • Start 2nd Year Project	Spring: Required Coursework • EXP 6257 Human Factors II (3) • PSB 6328 Psychophysiology (3)^a • EXP 6918 Directed Research (3) Research • Continue 2nd Year Project Recommended • Submit First Author Journal Article (prior to candidacy)	Summer: Recommended Coursework • Elective (3) AND EXP 6918 Directed Research (3) • OR EXP 6918 Directed Research (6) • OR Elective (6) Research • Complete 2nd Year Project Recommended • Submit First Author Journal Article (prior to candidacy)
Semester Total: 9	Semester Total: 9	Semester Total: 6

^a You may take this course to satisfy the PhD and MAW course requirements. If you use PSB 6348 Neuroanatomical Basis of Psychological Functions to satisfy this requirement, then you may replace PSB 6328 with a three-credit elective.

Third Year of Graduate Training

Entered the Program on an EVEN Year

Fall: Required Coursework - EXP 6258 Human Factors III (3) Recommended Coursework - PSY 7219C Advanced Research Methodology III (4) AND EXP 6918 Directed Research (3) - Elective (3) AND EXP 6918 Directed Research (3) Research 2nd Year Project Manuscript 2nd Year Project Presentation - Fall or Spring - Start Literature Review	Spring: Recommended Coursework - PSB 6328 Psychophysiology (3)^a - Elective (6) OR EXP 6918 Directed Research (6) Research 2nd Year Project Presentation - Fall or Spring - Complete Literature Review - Submit First Author Journal Article - prior to candidacy	Summer: Recommended Coursework - Elective (3) AND EXP 6918 Directed Research (3) - OR EXP 6918 Directed Research (6) - OR Elective (6) Research - Submit First Author Journal Article
Semester Total: 9	Semester Total: 9	Semester Total: 6

^a You may take this course to satisfy the PhD and MAW course requirements. If you use PSB 6348 Neuroanatomical Basis of Psychological Functions to satisfy this requirement, then you may replace PSB 6328 with a three-credit elective

Third Year of Graduate Training

Entered the Program on an ODD Year

Fall: Required Coursework - EXP 6258 Human Factors III (3) Recommended Coursework - PSY 7219C Advanced Research Methodology III (4) AND EXP 6918 Directed Research (3) - Elective (3) AND EXP 6918 Directed Research (3) Research 2nd Year Project Manuscript & Presentation - Fall or Spring - Start Literature Review	Spring: Recommended Coursework - PSB 6348 The Neuroanatomical Basis of Psychological Functions (3)^a - Elective (3) AND EXP 6918 Directed Research (3) Research 2nd Year Project Presentation - Fall or Spring - Complete Literature Review - Submit First Author Journal Article - prior to candidacy	Summer: Recommended Coursework - Elective (3) AND EXP 6918 Directed Research (3) - OR EXP 6918 Directed Research (6) - OR Elective (6) Research - Submit First Author Journal Article
Semester Total: 9	Semester Total: 9	Semester Total: 6

^a You may take this course to satisfy the PhD and MAW course requirement. If you use PSB 6328 Psychophysiology to satisfy this requirement, then you may replace PSB 6348 with a three-credit elective.

Fourth Year of Graduate Training

Fall: Required Coursework PSY 7980 Doctoral Dissertation (3)	Spring: Required Coursework PSY 7980 Doctoral Dissertation (3)	Summer: Required Coursework PSY 7980 Doctoral Dissertation (3)
Semester Total: 3	Semester Total: 3	Semester Total: 3

Fifth Year of Graduate Training

Fall: Required Coursework PSY 7980 Doctoral Dissertation (3)	Spring: Required Coursework PSY 7980 Doctoral Dissertation (3)	Summer: Required Coursework PSY 7980 Doctoral Dissertation (3)
Semester Total: 3	Semester Total: 3	Semester Total: 3

Restricted Registration

There are several categories of credit hours for COS graduate students that are restricted and require completion of a Restricted Registration Agreement (RRA) to enroll. Students do not enroll in these hours via myUCF - students should submit an RRA form via [COS Restricted Registration Docusign Form](#) to request enrollment.

Students are expected to begin their RRA form as early in the registration period as possible to avoid delays in processing. Prior to submission, students must ensure that all required fields are completed and that there are no holds on their student account.

The assignments section of the form should be completed in consultation with the student's instructor or Faculty Advisor. If a student is unable to complete a form they have started, they must contact the Program Coordinator to request that the incomplete form be deleted. Students should not submit duplicate forms under any circumstances. For questions regarding the status of a submitted RRA form, students should reach out to the Program Coordinator.

Course numbers and categories that require an RRA form:

- EXP 6908: Independent Study
- EXP 6918: Directed Research
- PSY 7980: Dissertation (must have candidacy status)

A student may be held to other enrollment requirements, as defined by financial awards, veteran status, employment, or other outside agencies.

Correct Course Prefix

It is critical that students register for restricted courses using the correct course prefix. Registering under an incorrect prefix may delay enrollment, affect degree progress, or require correction by the program.

- Directed Research and Independent Study courses must be registered under the EXP prefix
- Dissertation credits must be registered under the PSY prefix

Students are responsible for ensuring the correct prefix and course number are listed in the RRA form before submission.

Withdrawal Process

If a student decides to withdraw from a course, they must do so by the semester withdrawal deadline found in the Academic Catalog. In doing so, the student is still liable for tuition and fees for the course.

Competency Requirements

Purpose

The purpose of the following requirements is to develop and assess the competency of professional behaviors in doctoral-level graduate students. These goals include but are not limited to the development and demonstration of skills and abilities that enable graduating students to:

Competently engage in research

- Competently serve as innovative teachers/instructors in colleges and universities, and as presenters at local, regional, national, and international professional conferences.

Students admitted to the Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD Program must complete two competency domains: Research and Teaching and/or Professional Presentations to fulfill professional competency requirements.

Successful completion of the competency requirements reflects the program's desire to ensure overall breadth of training in the field of human factors & cognitive psychology that is complemented by individually tailored professional training experiences and competencies consistent with a student's career goals. The two domains outlined below are consistent with this intent.

Students are strongly encouraged to discuss their preferences and planned courses for fulfilling these requirements with their Faculty Advisors. All domain requirements must be met during enrollment in the Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD Program at the University of Central Florida; prior work from other institutions will not be accepted.

Procedures

Email is the official mode of communication for all program-related matters. Students must submit all competency materials via email to HFC@ucf.edu and their Faculty Advisor. Submitting materials to the HFC program email ensures they are retained as part of the program's official records. Students should consult with the Program Coordinator within the first two weeks of each semester to verify official documentation of professional activities. The Program Coordinator will notify students of submission dates and deadlines via email throughout the academic year.

Each competency activity has specific submission procedures, which are detailed in the corresponding sections of this handbook. Students are responsible for submitting the necessary documentation of completed competency activities required for the passing of candidacy. Proof of submission and participation - such as benchmark acceptance letters for peer-reviewed journal articles or conference agendas for presentations - are required for all relevant activities and must be sent via email as detailed above.

The Program Directors will review each submission. The Program Coordinator will notify students of their outcome in writing once all competency requirements are successfully met. Students may formally advance to Doctoral Candidacy after receiving this final letter of confirmation.

Competency Material Deadlines

Domain 1: Research Deadlines

First-Year Project Deadlines:

Manuscript: Two weeks after the start date of the first semester of the second year.

Presentation: At least two weeks after submission of the manuscript.

Second-Year Project Deadlines:

Manuscript: Two weeks after the start date of the first semester of the third year.

Presentation: By the end of the spring semester of the third year.

Literature Review Deadline:

End of the spring semester of the third year.

First-Author Published/Publishable Journal Article Deadline:

Must be completed prior to advancing to candidacy.

Domain 2: Teaching and/or Professional Presentation Deadlines

Teaching Experience Deadline:

Must be completed prior to advancing to candidacy

Professional Presentations Deadline:

Must be completed prior to advancing to candidacy

Before a deadline has passed, students may petition the HFC committee for extensions when appropriate.

Domain 1: Research

First Year Project

In the first year, all students must do a laboratory research project that includes at least one empirical study. The project must be approved and supervised by the student's Faculty Advisor.

Summary and Contributions Abstract

Students must submit the Summary and Contribution Abstract form in the middle of their first semester via email to their Faculty Advisor and the HFC program email at HFC@ucf.edu. The form should describe:

- The summary should be written in the format of an abstract and clearly describe the research question or objective (e.g., "This study will investigate the effects of X and Y on Z and W.").
- The abstract should clearly articulate how the study relates to Human Factors and/or Cognition and explain its contribution to the existing literature, including how it is novel and how it builds upon prior work.
- The abstract should also specify the student's individual contributions to the project (e.g., conceptualization, task development, data analysis, manuscript preparation, etc.).

The Program Coordinator will initiate the form and route it through Docusign. The form will first be sent to the student who will include an abstract describing the project, approved in collaboration with their Faculty Advisor, outline their individual contributions, and provide their signature. The form will then be routed to the Faculty Advisor and subsequently to the Program Directors for review and signature.

Once all signatures have been collected, the completed form will be reviewed by the HFC faculty committee during a faculty meeting. The Program Coordinator will communicate the outcome of the review, along with any associated feedback, to the student via email.

Manuscript

Students must submit a complete draft of the manuscript to their Faculty Advisor no

later than one month prior to the final paper deadline. At that time, students must also identify their selected second reader and notify the program via email at HFC@ucf.edu. Second readers should be selected early in consultation with the student's Faculty Advisor.

By 5:00PM two weeks after the start date of the first semester of the second year (if this date falls on a weekend or academic holiday the due date will be 5:00 PM on the first day following on which university classes are in session), students must submit the final draft of a written manuscript describing their research project.

Approval of the manuscript is required by both the advisor and second reader. Readers will evaluate the manuscript on a pass/fail basis and submit their evaluation to the Program Coordinator within two weeks. The Program Coordinator will notify students of their score shortly thereafter. If the advisor and the second reader disagree regarding whether the manuscript is acceptable, the manuscript will be reviewed by HFC program faculty who will vote on the final determination regarding pass/fail within a faculty meeting.

Formatting Guidelines

The manuscript must be structured in accordance with APA guidelines and include all sections necessary for a typical journal submission in their field. It should not exceed 20 pages of text (exclusive of References, Tables, and Figures). Supplemental materials may be included if applicable.

Presentation

Students must complete a 15-minute oral examination based on the written report, followed by a 5-minutes Q&A session. This examination will be in the format of an academic talk delivered to area faculty and students that will occur after submission of the manuscript at a time and date determined by the Program Directors.

Each faculty member provides written feedback for the student. Comments are compiled anonymously and shared following the presentation. This feedback is intended to support students' growth and development as scholars and presenters.

Presentations must earn an average total score of at least 15 points, calculated from the averaged scores across five evaluation areas with the highest and lowest scores in each area removed. Each area is assessed on a 1-5 scale, and students must achieve an average score of 2 or higher in each category. Below are the five evaluation areas along with a non-exhaustive set of examples for each area.

Organization

The presentation should be easy to follow, well thought out, and demonstrates a logical progression of ideas. The significance of the topic should be clearly stated, and the level of the material should be appropriate for the audience. Time should be allocated effectively across topics.

Understanding of Scientific Content

The presentation should reflect scientific rigor and be well grounded in the relevant literature. Students should clearly identify the research question and explain how it fits within the broader field. A strong understanding of the experimental approach is expected, along with the ability to critically evaluate methodology, results, and conclusions. Conclusions should logically follow from the interpretation of results, demonstrating mastery of the topic.

Style and Delivery

The presenter should speak clearly and concisely at an appropriate pace. Effective delivery includes conveying interest and enthusiasm, engaging the audience, and maintaining a professional demeanor. Presenters should interact with and highlight key aspects of the slides, make eye contact, avoid reading directly from notes or slides, and use appropriate academic and field-specific terminology.

Use of Visual Aids

Visual materials (e.g., tables, graphs, and figures) should effectively summarize data and clearly support the goals and conclusions of the study. Slides should be well formatted, with appropriate text and figure sizes. Axes and conditions should be clearly labeled, and error bars should be included when appropriate. Visual elements should be clear and concise, free of spelling or grammatical errors, and there should be a limited use of superfluous content, consistent with a professional talk.

Ability to Answer Questions

Students are expected to be prepared for audience questions and demonstrate the ability to understand and respond thoughtfully. Strong responses reflect the integration of relevant knowledge and the ability to address questions thoroughly and competently. Knowledge of the relevant background literature and of your study details are expected.

Students are encouraged to request their numerical scores from the Program Coordinator.

Evaluation Outcomes

Satisfactory performance on each component of this requirement is required to maintain good standing in the program. Cases in which performance is deemed unsatisfactory on either component may result in dismissal from the program but will at minimum result in either a program-level retention plan or academic probation, as determined by the HFC faculty committee.

If a retention plan is issued, the student must successfully satisfy all conditions outlined in the plan to maintain status in the program. Failure to meet the expectations of a retention plan or probationary conditions may result in further action, including continuation of probation or dismissal from the program.

If a student already on academic probation delivers work that is deemed unsatisfactory, they may be removed from the program at the discretion of the HFC faculty committee. Failure to complete this requirement is grounds for dismissal from the program.

Second Year Project

In the second year all students must do a laboratory research project that includes at least one empirical study. The project must be approved and supervised by the student's Faculty Advisor.

Summary and Contributions Abstract

Students must submit the Summary and Contribution Abstract form in the middle of their first semester via email to their Faculty Advisor and the HFC program email at HFC@ucf.edu. The form should describe:

- The summary should be written in the format of an abstract and clearly describe the research question or objective (e.g., "This study will investigate the effects of X and Y on Z and W.").
- The abstract should clearly articulate how the study relates to Human Factors and/or Cognition and explain its contribution to existing literature, including how it is novel and how it builds upon prior work.
- The abstract should also specify the student's individual contributions to the project (e.g., conceptualization, task development, data analysis, manuscript

preparation, etc.).

The Program Coordinator will initiate the form and route it through Docusign. The form will first be sent to the student who will include an abstract describing the project, approved in collaboration with their Faculty Advisor, outline their individual contributions, and provide their signature. The form will then be routed to the Faculty Advisor and subsequently to the Program Directors for review and signature.

Once all signatures have been collected, the completed form will be reviewed by the HFC faculty committee during a faculty meeting. The Program Coordinator will communicate the outcome of the review, along with any associated feedback, to the student via email.

Manuscript

Students must submit a complete draft of the manuscript to their Faculty Advisor no later than one month prior to the final paper deadline. At that time, students must also identify their selected second reader and notify the program via email to the HFC program email at HFC@ucf.edu. Second readers should be selected early in consultation with the student's Faculty Advisor. The second reader may be, but is not required to be, the same faculty member who served as second reader for the First Year Project.

By 5:00PM two weeks after the start date of the first semester of the second year (if this date falls on a weekend or academic holiday the due date will be 5:00 PM on the first day following on which university classes are in session), students must submit the final draft of a written manuscript describing their research project.

Approval of the manuscript is required by both the advisor and second reader. Readers will evaluate the manuscript on a pass/fail basis and submit their evaluation to the Program Coordinator within two weeks. The Program Coordinator will notify students of their score shortly thereafter. If the advisor and the second reader disagree regarding whether the manuscript is acceptable, then the manuscript will be reviewed by the entire HFC program, and the program will make the final determination regarding pass/fail. In this case, the pass/fail decisions will be voted upon during a HFC faculty meeting.

Formatting Guidelines

The manuscript must be structured in accordance with APA guidelines and include all sections necessary for a typical journal submission in their field. It should not exceed 20 pages of text (exclusive of References, Tables, and Figures). Supplemental materials may be included if applicable

Presentation

The student must complete a 45-minute oral examination based on the written report, followed by a 15-minute Q&A session with faculty and students. This examination will be in the format of an academic talk delivered to area faculty and students that will occur in an HFC program seminar (typically held on Friday afternoons) during the Fall or Spring semester of the third year in the program. The specific date on which the student presents their work will depend on the seminar schedules for those two semesters.

Presentations must earn an average total score of at least 20 points, calculated from the averaged scores across five evaluation areas with the highest and lowest scores in each area removed. Each area is assessed on a 1-5 scale, and students must achieve an average score of 2 or higher in each category. Below are the five evaluation areas along with a non-exhaustive set of examples for each area.

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The presenter should speak clearly and concisely at an appropriate pace. Effective delivery includes conveying interest and enthusiasm, engaging the audience, and maintaining a professional demeanor. Presenters should interact with and highlight key aspects of the slides, make eye contact, avoid reading directly from notes or slides, and use appropriate academic and field-specific terminology.

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Visual materials (e.g., tables, graphs, and figures) should effectively summarize data and clearly support the goals and conclusions of the study. Slides should be well formatted, with appropriate text and figure sizes. Axes and conditions should be clearly labeled, and error bars should be included when appropriate. Visual elements should be clear and concise, free of spelling or grammatical errors, and there should be a limited use of superfluous content, consistent with a professional talk.

Ability to Answer Questions

Students are expected to be prepared for audience questions and demonstrate the ability to understand and respond thoughtfully. Strong responses reflect the integration of relevant knowledge and the ability to address questions thoroughly and competently. Knowledge of the relevant background literature and of your study details are expected.

Students are encouraged request their numerical scores from the Program Coordinator.

Evaluation Outcomes

Satisfactory performance on both components of this requirement is required to maintain good standing in the program. Cases in which performance is deemed unsatisfactory on either component may result in dismissal from the program but will at a minimum result in either a program-level retention plan or academic probation, as determined by the HFC faculty committee.

If a retention plan is issued, the student must successfully satisfy all conditions outlined in the plan to maintain status in the program. Failure to meet the expectations of a retention plan or probationary conditions may result in further action, including continuation of probation or dismissal from the program.

If a student already on academic probation delivers work that is deemed unsatisfactory, they may be removed from the program at the discretion of the HFC faculty committee. Failure to complete this requirement is grounds for dismissal from the program.

Literature Review

Students will fulfill the Literature Review requirement by completing a sole-authored review paper in consultation with their Faculty Advisor. The paper should synthesize literature within the student's research area of interest and advance novel hypotheses, models, or conceptual frameworks that contribute to the existing body of work. Students may, but are not required to, use this paper as a foundation for their

dissertation introduction.

Students must provide a complete draft of the manuscript to their Faculty Advisor at least two weeks prior to the final submission deadline. The final, approved version must be submitted via email to the Faculty Advisor, second reader, and the HFC program email at HFC@ucf.edu no later than 5:00 PM on the last day of the final exam period in the spring semester of the third year.

The Literature Review is evaluated on a pass/fail basis. Approval from both the Faculty Advisor and second reader is required to pass. Reviewers will evaluate the manuscript and submit their determination to the Program Coordinator within two weeks of submission. If the Faculty Advisor and second reader disagree, the manuscript will be reviewed by the full HFC faculty, and a final pass/fail determination will be made by vote during a faculty meeting.

Formatting Guidelines

The review paper must be formatted in accordance with APA guidelines. Students may refer to papers published in the [Annual Review of Psychology](#) for guidelines on the length, composition, and level of support included in a well-composed review.

Evaluation Outcomes

Satisfactory performance on this requirement is required to maintain good standing in the program. Cases in which performance is deemed unsatisfactory may result in dismissal from the program but will at minimum result in either a program-level retention plan or academic probation, as determined by the HFC faculty committee.

If a retention plan is issued, the student must successfully satisfy all conditions outlined in the plan to maintain status in the program. Failure to meet the expectations of a retention plan or probationary conditions may result in further action, including continuation of probation or dismissal from the program.

If a student already on academic probation delivers work that is deemed unsatisfactory, they may be removed from the program at the discretion of the HFC faculty committee. Failure to complete this requirement is grounds for dismissal from the program.

First Author Published/Publishable Journal Article

Students are required to submit a manuscript to a refereed journal. The manuscript must be based on empirical research and reflect work for which the student serves as

first or sole author, demonstrating that it is of publishable quality in a peer-reviewed outlet.

This requirement is intended to complement students' graduate-level coursework in research methods, design, statistics, and ongoing research practica while further developing their conceptual and professional writing skills. It encourages students to bring completed scholarly work to the point of journal submission, engage in the peer review process, and respond constructively to feedback provided by professional reviewers. Through this experience, students strengthen their ability to communicate research findings effectively and build their academic CVs through the pursuit of publication.

A manuscript fulfills this requirement once it has been submitted to a peer-reviewed journal and has entered the review process (i.e., it has not been desk rejected). Students must achieve "under review" status prior to advancing to candidacy.

To confirm this milestone, students must submit both the manuscript and documentation verifying that it is under review. Acceptable documentation includes confirmation from the submission portal or correspondence from the journal editor. These materials must be submitted via email to the student's Faculty Advisor and the HFC program email at HFC@ucf.edu for inclusion in the student's competency materials. Once the materials have been received, the Program Coordinator will update the student's myUCF To-Do list to reflect completion of this requirement.

The manuscript and any available editorial responses may be reviewed by the HFC Committee to determine whether the student has satisfied this requirement.

Evaluation Outcomes

Completion of this requirement in a timely fashion is required to maintain good standing in the program. Cases in which performance is deemed unsatisfactory may result in dismissal from the program, academic probation, or a program-level retention plan, as determined by the HFC faculty committee.

If a retention plan is issued, the student must successfully satisfy all conditions outlined in the plan to maintain status in the program. Failure to meet the expectations of a retention plan or probationary conditions may result in further action, including continuation of probation or dismissal from the program.

If a student already on academic probation is unable to complete this requirement in a timely fashion, they may be removed from the program at the discretion of the HFC faculty committee. Failure to complete this requirement is grounds for dismissal from

the program.

Domain 2: Teaching and/or Professional Presentations

As part of the program's independent learning requirements, students must demonstrate competency in teaching and/or professional communication. This domain is designed to develop students' ability to effectively convey knowledge, engage with diverse audiences, and contribute to the field through instruction or scholarly dissemination.

Students may fulfill this requirement by completing one of two pathways: serving as instructor of record for an undergraduate course or completing a series of professional presentations. Selection of the pathway should be made in consultation with the student's Faculty Advisor.

Reporting Activities

Students must report completed activities to their Faculty Advisor, Program Directors, and Program Coordinator within thirty (30) days of the presentation or the end of the semester in which the teaching activity occurred. Timely reporting ensures proper documentation of progress toward program requirements. Activities submitted after this deadline may not be considered toward fulfillment of this competency.

All activities are subject to review by the HFC faculty committee to determine whether the requirement has been satisfactorily met.

Point System

This domain operates on a points-based system, with students earning credit through approved teaching and professional presentation activities. The point system reflects the scope and level of engagement of each activity, allowing students to fulfill the requirement through a range of instructional and scholarly experiences.

Oral Presentation/Talk:

One paper presentation at a National/International conference: **2 points**

One paper presentation at a Regional conference: **1 point**

One HFC program Colloquium/Brown Bag Talk: **1 point**

Posters:

One poster presentation at a National/International conference: **1 point**

One poster presentation at a Regional conference: **½ point**

UCF Student Scholar Symposium:

One paper or poster presentation: **½ point**

Teaching:

Instructor of Record of an undergraduate course: **4 points**

Graduate Teaching Assistant of an in-person lab section: **1 point**

Teaching

Students who choose to fulfill this requirement through teaching must serve as instructor of record for an undergraduate course at UCF. As part of this experience, students are expected to develop and deliver course materials and engage in all aspects of course instruction. Serving as instructor of record fulfills the full requirement for this domain (four points) upon successful completion of the teaching assignment.

To document completion, students must submit instructional materials, including a course syllabus, lecture materials, and assessments, and receive a Student Perception of Instruction (SPI) evaluation administered by UCF. This experience is intended to support the development of instructional skills and prepare students for future teaching and training roles. Through this process, students will:

- Develop and refine skills in course design and instruction
- Gain experience delivering and adapting content for diverse learning environments
- Receive and incorporate feedback on teaching effectiveness. Build proficiency with instructional technologies and teaching strategies
- Deepen expertise in specific areas of psychology relevant to their professional goals

Students must complete all required UCF Graduate Teaching Associate training prior to serving as instructor of record. Students must submit their assistantship contract via email including the student's Faculty Advisor and the HFC program email at

HFC@ucf.edu as official documentation.

Professional Presentations

Students may fulfill this requirement through professional presentations, which provide opportunities to engage in research beyond required coursework and share their work with the broader academic and professional community. This pathway supports the development of scholarly communication skills and encourages active participation in the field.

HFC students regularly present their work at major conferences such as the [Human Factors and Ergonomics Society](#) (HFES), [Vision Sciences Society](#) (VSS), [Object Perception, Attention, and Memory](#) (OPAM), and the [Psychonomic Society](#) annual meetings, as well as specialized conferences such as [HFES in Healthcare](#). Students also frequently present at the [UCF Student Scholar Symposium](#) and other regional and national events.

Through these experiences, students develop competency in:

- Preparing and submitting scholarly work for professional review. Delivering oral and poster presentations to academic professional audiences
- Using presentation technologies and formats for research dissemination
- Receiving and incorporating feedback from experts in the field

Students earn points toward this requirement by serving as the primary presenter on accepted conference presentations. Documentation is required to verify participation and may include a conference program listing for their presentation, confirmation from the Faculty Advisor, a certificate of participation (if provided), or other official materials from the event. All documentation should clearly indicate the student's role and contribution to the work presented.

Doctoral Candidacy

Overview

Candidacy is an official designation granted by the College of Graduate Studies upon verification of all program requirements and marks a student's formal transition to independent dissertation research. In the Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD Program, admission to candidacy indicates that the student has demonstrated sufficient academic preparation and research readiness to begin focused dissertation work.

Eligibility

Students are eligible to advance to candidacy once their competency requirements have been verified, their Dissertation Advisory Committee has been approved (including Graduate Faculty Scholar approval, if applicable), and all administrative records are up to date in [myUCF](#), including the Program of Study and To-Do List.

Students are responsible for ensuring that all required materials have been submitted in accordance with program procedures. Delays in completing or submitting required materials may postpone advancement to candidacy and prevent enrollment in dissertation hours for the intended term.

Dissertation Advisory Committee

Composition

Students must establish a Dissertation Advisory Committee prior to completing their competency requirements. The committee must consist of at least four members, including at least three regular faculty members from the Psychology Department at UCF. The committee chair is typically the student's Faculty Advisor. The chair and at least one additional member must be HFC Program faculty. The third member may be affiliated with either the HFC program or the Psychology Department, while the fourth member must be external to the Psychology Department or external to UCF. External committee members may not hold a joint appointment within the Psychology Department and may not have received a PhD from UCF within the past five years. Students must work closely with their Faculty Advisor when identifying appropriate committee members.

Approval Process

To formally establish the committee, students must complete the [Dissertation Advisory Committee Form](#) through the College of Graduate Studies [Forms and References](#) page by the established deadline in the [Academic Calendar](#). The process begins with the student entering the names and email addresses of all proposed committee members. The form is then routed for electronic signatures from each committee member, followed by review and verification by the Program Coordinator. After departmental review, the form is submitted to the College of Sciences and then to the College of Graduate Studies for final approval and official recording. Students must ensure all information, particularly email addresses, is entered accurately, as errors may delay processing. This process should be completed well in advance of candidacy to ensure timely approval.

Graduate Faculty Scholar

Graduate Faculty Scholars are typically external committee members who are not part of the UCF Graduate Faculty but provide relevant expertise to a student's research. If a student wishes to include a Graduate Faculty Scholar on their committee, formal nomination and approval by the College of Graduate Studies is required prior to candidacy. Students must provide the nominee's current CV and work with the Program Coordinator to complete the required nomination form. The Program Coordinator will submit the final materials to the College of Graduate Studies on the student's behalf. The nomination must be approved by program and departmental leadership before being forwarded for final review. Because approval timelines can vary, students are strongly encouraged to begin this process early.

Notification of Passing Candidacy

The process of advancing to doctoral candidacy in the Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD Program involves both program-level and college-level approvals. After students establish their dissertation committee, the Program Coordinator will submit a Passing of Candidacy Form to the College of Graduate Studies on the student's behalf. Once the form is approved, students will receive direct communication from the College of Graduate Studies confirming their status.

Enrollment in Dissertation Hours

After candidacy is approved, students may begin enrolling in dissertation hours. Students are required to take a minimum of 15 credits of dissertation hours (PSY 7980). Dissertation research is considered to be a full-time effort, and post-candidacy enrollment in at least 3 credit hours constitutes full-time graduate status. At no time may a student register for all 15 required hours of dissertation in a single semester. Students wishing to enroll in more or than 3 credit hours must have approval from

their Faculty Advisor.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

All students conducting research involving human participants must comply with UCF's [Institutional Review Board \(IRB\) requirements](#). IRB approval must be obtained before any data collection begins. The application process is managed through the university's Huron IRB system.

To begin the IRB process, students should work closely with their Faculty Advisor and committee to finalize their research design, including study procedures, materials, and data collection plan. Students should ensure that all required components, such as recruitment materials, consent forms, and study instruments, are prepared prior to submission.

Once the application is submitted through Huron, it will undergo review by the IRB. Students should be prepared to respond to requested revisions, as most applications require at least one round of feedback before approval is granted. Processing timelines vary depending on the type of review required and the completeness of the submission. Students are encouraged to begin the IRB process early to allow sufficient time for review and revisions. No research activities involving human participants may begin until formal IRB approval has been received.

Doctoral Dissertation

Overview

The dissertation is a required component of all PhD programs and must include an oral defense. The dissertation consists of an original and substantial research study designed, conducted and reported by the student with the guidance of the Dissertation Advisory Committee.

The written dissertation must include a common theme with an introduction and literature review, details of the study, results and conclusions prepared in accordance with program and university requirements. The dissertation is expected to represent a significant contribution to the discipline. As is true with all of the competency requirements, this work must be original. It is very important that care is taken to properly cite ideas and quotations of others. Failure to do so is academic dishonesty and subject to termination from the program without receiving the degree. In exceptional circumstances, the use of an archival data set may be accepted through a petition to the HFC committee.

Chronological Guide and Required Materials

The dissertation process is a structured sequence of academic and administrative steps that culminate in the successful completion of a doctoral dissertation. This section outlines each required milestone - from the proposal stage through final submission - and highlights key expectations, forms, and deadlines.

The Thesis and Dissertation Webcourse serves as the primary resource and submission platform for all dissertation requirements. Students must enroll in and actively monitor the Webcourse, as it provides detailed guidance and instructions for completing required steps, including the format review and final dissertation upload.

While this section provides an overview of the process, students are expected to rely on the [Thesis and Dissertation Webcourse](#) and the [College of Graduate Studies](#) for the most current procedures, templates, and submission requirements. Careful planning, timely communication, and adherence to all requirements are essential for a smooth and successful doctoral experience.

IRB Study Closure

At the conclusion of a dissertation study involving human subjects, students must formally close their IRB-approved study. Study closure is a critical part of maintaining ethical research standards and institutional compliance. Closing a study signals to the IRB that all research activities have been completed and that no further interaction with participants or use of identifiable data will occur. Data analysis may continue after study closure; however, additional data collection is not permitted. Students should ensure that all necessary data have been collected before closing the study.

Failure to close an IRB study prior to graduation may result in administrative complications, noncompliance with federal regulations, and potential issues with future IRB submissions.

To close a study, students must submit a Continuing Review in the Huron IRB system and indicate that the study is ready for closure. There is no separate “study closure” button. Instructions for completing this process are available in the [Huron IRB system](#) under: IRB → Help Center → Guides → UCF Researcher Guide to Huron IRB Internal Studies. Students should consult their Faculty Advisor or the IRB office if they have questions about the closure process.

Proposal

To schedule the dissertation proposal, students must first coordinate with their Dissertation Advisory Committee to identify a mutually acceptable date and time. Once a date has been confirmed, students should notify the Program Coordinator and arrange a room reservation if needed.

Students are required to provide an advisor-approved version of the proposal manuscript to their committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled proposal date to allow sufficient time for review.

The proposal should include the following components:

- Title
- Introduction to the problem
- Comprehensive review of relevant literature
- Statement of the study’s significance and originality
- Theoretical framework and hypotheses
- Planned methodology

- Planned data analytic approach

Following the proposal meeting, students must request that the Program Coordinator initiate the Dissertation Proposal Approval Docusign form. The form will be routed to all committee members for review and approval, followed by the Program Director and the student for acknowledgment. Approval by a majority of the committee indicates that the proposed research, literature review, and methodology are appropriate for doctoral-level work.

Intent to Graduate

At the beginning of the semester in which the student plans to defend their dissertation, they must submit an [Intent to Graduate](#) (ITG) form through the [myUCF](#) portal. This step is essential for initiating the degree audit process conducted by the College of Graduate Studies. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that their Program of Study is accurate and up to date prior to submission. As part of the ITG process, students will also verify their name and mailing address in the university system and complete an exit survey. Students are encouraged to consult with the Program Coordinator or Faculty Advisor if they have questions about the ITG process or deadlines.

If a student misses the published deadline for filing the ITG, they may submit a Late Intent to Graduate form; however, this may affect their eligibility to participate in commencement for that term. Students who graduate under a Late ITG may still participate in a future commencement ceremony up to three semesters after their graduation.

TD Release Option (iThenticate)

As part of final semester requirements, students must complete the Thesis and Dissertation (TD) Release Option form through the [myUCF](#) portal by the Intent to Graduate deadline. This form confirms that the final document will be made publicly available through UCF's institutional repository, [STARS](#). Students are encouraged to complete the form early in the term, as the dissertation format review will not begin until it has been submitted.

In addition, all doctoral students must complete an originality review using iThenticate. Students are responsible for submitting their dissertation to iThenticate and providing the report to their Dissertation Chair for review. This process helps ensure academic integrity and may be used to guide revisions prior to final submission

Format Review

To remain eligible for commencement in the final semester, dissertation students must submit a defense-ready version of their manuscript for format review by the published Format Review Deadline in the [Academic Calendar](#). Submissions are completed through the Format Review Assignment in the Thesis and Dissertation [Webcourse](#). Students must select the appropriate semester and upload a bookmarked PDF for evaluation.

Reviews are typically completed within five to seven business days and will be marked as either “complete” or “incomplete.” If revisions are required, students may resubmit after the deadline, provided the initial submission was on time. To support successful submission, students are encouraged to use the approved templates, follow the Format Review Checklist, and attend formatting help sessions offered both in-person and online. Appointments may be scheduled through [Webcourses](#), and questions can be directed to ETDHelp@ucf.edu.

All dissertations must adhere to UCF’s formatting and content standards, which ensure consistency, academic integrity, and accessibility across graduate research submissions. These requirements apply regardless of discipline or manuscript structure. General formatting requirements include:

- A single abstract following the title page (chapter-level abstracts are not permitted)
- A unified table of contents and comprehensive introduction
- Consistent formatting of headings, pagination, and layout throughout the document
- A single-column, double-spaced manuscript format

If figures or tables are included, a consolidated list of figures and/or tables must be provided. Figures and tables may be numbered consecutively or by chapter, but formatting must be consistent throughout the document. A reference section is required and may be organized either by chapter or as a single consolidated list at the end of the manuscript.

Each dissertation must include the following components (in order):

- Title Page (required)

- Copyright Page (optional)
- Abstract (required)
- Dedication (optional)
- Acknowledgments (optional)
- Table of Contents (required)
- List of Figures and/or Tables (if applicable)
- Chapters (required)
- Appendix (optional)
- References (required)
- Index (optional)

Copyright and co-authorship considerations:

If previously published or accepted work is included, students must obtain written permission from the copyright holder and include documentation in an appendix. Each chapter containing prior publication must include a disclosure statement identifying the source and authorship.

For co-authored work, the student must be the primary contributor, and their specific contributions must be clearly identified. Written permission from all co-authors is required. Dissertations must represent the student's independent scholarship, and multiple-authored dissertations are not permitted.

Defense Announcement

In accordance with UCF's graduate policies, all final dissertation defenses must be publicly announced at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense date. To ensure this requirement is met, students should initiate their defense announcement using the College of Sciences [Defense Announcement form](#) at least three weeks in advance.

The announcement must include the date, time, location (or virtual meeting link), a brief abstract (200-300 words), and the names of all committee members. Prior to submission, the form must be reviewed and approved by the student's committee chair, so students should confirm their chair's availability to complete this step in a timely manner. Once completed and approved, the announcement will be processed and distributed in accordance with COS and CGS procedures. Students are responsible for initiating this process early to ensure compliance with University deadlines.

Dissertation Defense

To schedule a dissertation defense, students must first coordinate with their Dissertation Advisory Committee to identify a mutually acceptable date and time. Once a date is confirmed, students should notify the Program Coordinator and arrange a room reservation if needed.

Students are responsible for distributing the final dissertation manuscript to all committee members and the Program Coordinator no later than two weeks prior to the scheduled defense date.

Dissertation Approval Forms

Following a successful dissertation defense, students must notify the Program Coordinator and request that a Docusign envelope be initiated for final approval. This envelope will include both the College of Graduate Studies (CGS) Dissertation Approval form and the HFC Defense Approval form, which together document committee approval of the dissertation.

The Program Coordinator will route the Docusign forms to all required signatories. Once all signatures have been obtained, the Program Coordinator will submit the CGS Dissertation Approval form to the College of Graduate Studies for final processing and the dean's signature. The HFC Defense Approval form will be retained for program records. Timely communication with the Program Coordinator is essential to ensure proper processing of these materials and to avoid delays in graduation.

Final Submission of the Dissertation

The final step in the dissertation process is submission to [STARS](#) (Showcase of Text, Archives, Research & Scholarship), UCF's institutional digital repository managed by the [UCF Libraries](#). This submission is a graduation requirement and must be completed by the Final Submission Deadline, as published each semester in the [Academic Calendar](#). STARS serves as the official platform for archiving and publicly sharing approved dissertations, ensuring long-term preservation and global access to student research.

To complete the submission, students must log into the STARS system using their UCF credentials. The submission URL is located in the Final Submission Instructions file, found in the Format Review assignment comments in [Webcourses](#). Students must

complete the submission form and upload the final PDF of their dissertation, along with any optional supplemental files such as datasets, audio, or video materials. It is important to allow sufficient time for large files to upload and to ensure all materials are fully submitted before leaving the page. All submissions are considered final unless the College of Graduate Studies specifically requests a resubmission. Processing begins only after the signed approval form has been received. Most submissions are not approved until after the final deadline.

Students will receive two confirmation emails, one when the submission is approved and another when the dissertation is officially posted in STARS, which typically occurs about one month after the semester ends. Students should verify that their STARS account reflects confirmation of submission to ensure successful completion of this requirement.

Graduate Teaching Assistantships

Overview

Students are typically supported through graduate assistantship appointments, which provide a stipend, tuition waiver, and UCF-sponsored health insurance, in accordance with university policies.

The program provides support for the fall and spring semesters of the first four years of study, contingent on departmental resources and the student remaining in good standing with both the program and the College of Graduate Studies. Funding during the summer terms or beyond the fourth year may be available depending on departmental needs.

Eligibility

Eligibility for an assistantship requires admission to the graduate program and full-time enrollment. Continued employment is contingent upon maintaining full-time enrollment, compliance with university employment requirements, and remaining in good standing with both the program and the College of Graduate Studies.

Graduate teaching assistantships have historically been available to students regardless of year in the program; however, priority is given to students in their first through fourth years. Assistantship positions and associated tuition waivers beyond the fourth year are dependent on program resources and departmental needs.

Appointments

Students may be appointed as Graduate Teaching Assistants, Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs), or Graduate Assistants (GAs) based on program and departmental needs. Students interested in an Associates position (instructor of record) will be prompted via email by the Program Coordinator to indicate their interest each semester.

Workload

All funded students are appointed to a 20-hour weekly assistantship. This requirement may be fulfilled through a single 20-hour assistantship or through a combination of two 10-hour assistantship assignments, depending on departmental needs and appointment structure. Assignments that exceed 20 hours during the fall or spring semesters require prior university approval; additional approval is not required for summer appointments.

Specific duties vary by assignment, while stipend amounts are consistent across appointments.

Tuition Waivers

Tuition waivers are a benefit associated with graduate assistantship appointments that cover the full cost of graduate tuition; however, university fees and other personal expenses are not included and remain the responsibility of the student.

Certain fellowships also provide tuition support. Students should review the letter offering the fellowship and the terms of the award to see if tuition support is included. Specific questions concerning the amount of tuition included with a given fellowship may be directed to the UCF College of Graduate Studies at gradfellowship@ucf.edu.

Assignments

Approximately one month prior to the start of each semester, students will receive an email prompting them to log into the [Graduate Financial System](#) (GFS) to review and accept their GTA assignment. Students must review the details of their appointment and electronically sign the agreement. Once submitted, the contract will automatically route to the Department Chair for review and final approval.

Please note that GTA assignments are subject to change based on departmental needs and course scheduling. Changes may occur even after the agreement has been signed. If adjustments are necessary, the Program Coordinator will communicate any updates directly to the student.

Required Training and Materials

All graduate students must complete mandatory training to be eligible for and maintain their assistantship positions. There are no exceptions to these training requirements. Failure to complete them may result in ineligibility for assistantship appointments.

- GTA Grader and Assistant Training: Required for all assistantships. Must be completed online in UCF [Webcourses](#) by the semester deadline.
- GTA Associate Training: Required for serving as instructors of record. Includes completion of the GTA Associate online module and attendance at a face-to-face workshop hosted by the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning held before each term begins.
- Supporting Students in Distress: All student employees must complete this university-wide training on mental health and suicide prevention. Registration is available through [Workday](#).

Alternatively, completion of [Preparing Tomorrow's Faculty Program](#) satisfies all GTA training requirements if completed in a prior semester. Concurrent enrollment does not fulfill the requirement.

Teaching Qualification

Before the beginning of their first semester as an instructor of record, students must submit a Teaching Qualification form. This is a dynamic form and must be accessed from the College of Sciences [Forms and References](#) page. Students are responsible for completing the required sections of the form in consultation with their contract supervisor. Once completed, the [Teaching Qualification form](#) and the associated agreement must be submitted together to the College of Graduate Studies for review and approval at gradservices@ucf.edu. These materials must be approved before the student may begin teaching independently.

Versant English Speaking and Listening Test

Students who are non-native speakers of English and do not hold a degree from a U.S. institution must complete the [Versant English Speaking and Listening Test](#) before they are eligible to serve as Graduate Teaching Associates, Assistants, or Graders. The Versant Test is administered by UCF Global and is used to assess spoken English proficiency for instructional roles.

Students must register in advance for a scheduled test session through the UCF Global website and pay the required testing fee. The Versant Test is administered at designated testing times and is not an on-demand, self-paced online exam. Students are encouraged to review available test dates and register early to avoid delays in assistantship eligibility.

Based on test performance, students may be required to complete language support training through UCF Global. Students who meet the required score may proceed with teaching eligibility, while those who do not may complete an English communication course before retesting. Additional information, including registration and preparation resources, is available through [UCF Global](#).

GTA Performance Assessments

UCF requires that the teaching-related performances of all Graduate Teaching Associates, Assistants, and Graders be assessed at the end of each term that the

student serves as a GTA. The GTA assessment is documented through the submission of the online GTA Performance Assessment to the UCF College of Graduate Studies.

This form constitutes a summary rating based on the areas of performance that were required in the GTA's teaching-related assignment(s). The GTA's assigned contract supervisor (the first person listed on the student's GTA assistantship agreement) submits the rating online after appropriate consultation with the Department Chair, Graduate Program Directors, or other relevant individuals. This summative assessment will be discussed with the student, and the student will be given an opportunity to respond to the assessment.

Funding and Professional Development

Students are encouraged to pursue funding, fellowships, travel support, and professional awards throughout their time in the program. These opportunities provide financial support for research and professional activities while also strengthening a student's CV, increasing visibility in the field, and supporting long-term career development. Students are encouraged to work with their Faculty Advisor to identify opportunities aligned with their research and career goals.

Fellowships

Fellowships are among the most competitive and impactful forms of graduate funding. In addition to providing financial support, fellowship awards signal strong research potential, independence, and academic excellence. Students are encouraged to apply for fellowships when eligible. A non-exhaustive list of fellowships our students often receive is listed below.

- [UCF Presidential Doctoral Fellowship](#) - A university fellowship providing multi-year financial support, including a stipend, tuition coverage, and health insurance, to support full-time doctoral study. Determined at the time of admission.
- [McKnight Doctoral Fellowship](#) - A state-supported fellowship offering multi-year stipend support and professional development resources to doctoral students pursuing PhDs at participating Florida institutions.
- [SMART](#) - A Department of Defense-funded program providing full tuition, annual stipend, and paid internships, along with guaranteed employment following graduation.
- [NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program \(GRFP\)](#) - A nationally competitive fellowship providing multi-year funding, including a stipend and tuition support, for students pursuing research-based graduate degrees in STEM and related fields.
- [NIH NRSA Predoctoral Fellowship \(F31\)](#) - A federally funded fellowship supporting dissertation research through mentored training, providing stipend support and funding tied to a student's research project.
- [Graduate Dean's Dissertation Completion Fellowship](#) - A competitive fellowship providing financial support to doctoral students in their final semester to facilitate dissertation completion.

Research Funding and Training Opportunities

Research funding and training programs support the development of independent research skills, provide resources for dissertation and pre-dissertation work, and offer opportunities to engage in applied and interdisciplinary research. The opportunities listed below reflect funding sources and programs that HFC students commonly pursue or engage with during their training.

- [UCF TRT: Sunshine ERC Targeted Research Training Program](#) - A structured training and research program providing funding and interdisciplinary experience in applied, collaborative research environments.
- [Richard Tucker Gerontology Research Grant](#) - A competitive research award supporting student-led projects related to aging, human performance, and lifespan development.
- [NSF Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants \(DDRIG\)](#) - A nationally competitive grant program providing funding to support dissertation research across STEM and social science disciplines.
- [NSF Research Traineeship \(NRT\) Program](#) - A federally funded training program supporting interdisciplinary research and professional skill development in emerging and high-impact fields.
- [Doctoral Research Support Award](#) - Funding provided by the College of Graduate Studies to support dissertation research expenses and scholarly activities.
- [Open Access Publishing Fund](#) - A College of Graduate Studies funding program that supports open-access publication costs (APCs) for eligible graduate students and recent graduates
- [Leonard P. Gollobin Postgraduate Scholarship](#) - A scholarship program that provides financial support to graduate students pursuing advanced study in human factors and related fields.

Travel Awards and Conference Support

Conference travel funding supports the presentation of research and participation in professional communities, both of which are central to doctoral training. The opportunities below represent common sources of support used by HFC students when presenting research.

Department and Program Travel Support

The Department of Psychology and HFC program provide internal funding to support student conference travel when resources are available. Historically, the department allocates a designated allotment of travel funding to the program. When funding is available, the Program Coordinator will contact students to identify those planning to present during the specified funding period. Distribution varies by year and is dependent on available resources.

All travel must be coordinated in accordance with university procedures. Students are expected to work with their Faculty Advisor and the department's Travel and Procurement (TPC) Coordinator for travel authorization, booking, and reimbursement.

External Travel Funding

- [CGS Graduate Presentation Fellowship](#) - Provides university funding to support travel for students presenting research at academic conferences.
- [SGA Travel Grant](#) - Offers student government funding to offset conference travel expenses for academic or professional presentations.
- [HFES Student Travel Award / Student Presenter Award](#) - Competitive awards providing support for student attendance and research presentations at the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society annual meeting.
- [VSS Travel Grant](#) - Provides funding support for students presenting research at the Vision Sciences Society annual meeting.

Conference Awards

Conference awards recognize high-quality research and strong presentation performance within professional communities. These awards contribute to a student's visibility and professional reputation. The awards listed below reflect distinctions that HFC students have received or are encouraged to pursue.

- [HFES Student Research Award](#) - A competitive award recognizing and supporting student research in human factors, ergonomics, and applied cognitive systems.
- [HFES Best Student Paper or Poster Awards](#) - Awards recognizing outstanding student research presented at the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society annual meeting.

- [HFES Alphonse Chapanis Award](#) - A national award recognizing excellence in student research in human factors and ergonomics.
- [Psychonomic Society Student Awards](#) - Awards recognizing high-quality student research contributions within cognitive and experimental psychology.
- [VSS Student Poster Award](#) - An award recognizing outstanding student poster presentations at the Vision Sciences Society annual meeting.
- [Judge's Choice Award - Student Scholar Symposium](#) - A university award recognizing exceptional student research presentations at the annual symposium.

University Awards

University-level awards recognize excellence across teaching, research, leadership, and overall academic achievement. These honors reflect a student's contributions to the academic community and professional development. The awards listed below represent common forms of recognition available to graduate students at the university.

- [Award for Excellence by a Graduate Teaching Assistant](#) - A university award recognizing outstanding instructional support and contributions to student learning.
- [Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching](#) - A university award recognizing excellence among graduate students serving as instructors of record.
- [Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award](#) - An award recognizing exceptional performance in graduate teaching roles at the college or department level.
- [Award for Outstanding Dissertation](#) - A university award recognizing exceptional doctoral research and scholarly contribution.
- [Order of Pegasus](#) - The university's highest student honor recognizing academic achievement, leadership, and community impact.

UCF's Access to Opportunities

Additional funding opportunities are available through [Access to Opportunities \(A2O\)](#) platform, which matches students to scholarships based on a single application. Students are encouraged to maintain an updated profile and review available

opportunities regularly, as new funding sources may become available throughout the academic year.

Travel & Procurement Procedures

The Department of Psychology works with a Travel and Procurement Coordinator (TPC) from the College of Sciences Financial Business Center to support student travel and research-related purchases. The TPC helps coordinate travel authorization, purchasing, and the required paperwork for approved student expenses.

If students plan to use funding, they must first obtain approval from their Faculty Advisor and confirm the appropriate funding source. The approved funding source will provide the appropriate Worktag (budget account number), which must be used when submitting requests. All requests are processed through [Workday](#), which routes approvals and provides status updates. Students are responsible for monitoring Workday notifications and responding promptly.

Travel Requests

Students planning to travel on behalf of the university or represent the program must complete the formal travel authorization process before making any arrangements, regardless of whether funding is being used. This process should be initiated as soon as travel plans are confirmed to allow sufficient time for processing and approval.

Step 1: Obtain Approval

Work with your Faculty Advisor to confirm travel plans, funding source, and obtain the appropriate Worktags.

Step 2: Complete the Travel Authorization Request (TAR)

The Travel Authorization Request form is available from the Program Coordinator or the TPC. When completing the TAR students should:

- Include a clear business purpose and justification
- Complete the “Benefit to UCF” section explaining how the travel supports your research, professional development, or visibility of UCF
- Only include expenses covered by approved funding
- Provide estimated costs
 - Estimates should reflect the maximum expected cost
 - Ex, if your travel award is \$1,000 and your costs may range from \$800 -

\$900, you should enter \$900

- Include maximum travel dates if your schedule is not finalized
- Include the correct Worktag.

Additional requirements may apply depending on the nature of the travel. International travel requires prior approval from UCF Global and completion of the Travel Registration form available through the [UCF Global](#) website. In some cases, additional university approvals may also be required based on the funding source or travel destination.

Step 3: Submit and Await Processing

Return the completed TAR to the Program Coordinator, who will route it for required signatures and forward it to the TPC. A copy will be returned to the student for records. The TPC will then create a Spend Authorization in Workday and notify the student of next steps. Do not book travel until the Spend Authorization is fully approved in Workday.

Submitting early is critical:

- Domestic travel: at least 1 month in advance
- International travel: at least 3 months in advance
- Additional approvals may require extra time

Step 4: Book Travel (After Approval Only)

Once the Spend Authorization has been fully approved in Workday, travel arrangements may be made in accordance with university procedures. In most cases, the university will coordinate and purchase travel on behalf of the student to ensure compliance with university policies. However, in certain circumstances, students may be required to book travel themselves after approval has been granted. The TPC will provide guidance on how to proceed and will let students know whether travel will be purchased on their behalf or if they should move forward with booking independently.

Step 5: After Travel

Within 10 days of return, students must:

- Contact the TPC to reconcile travel in Workday

- Submit required documentation
- Provide itemized receipts

All travel must be reconciled, even if prepaid. Delays may impact processing or funding.

Non-Travel Purchases

Students requesting funding for research-related purchases (e.g., supplies, materials, or participant-related expenses) must obtain approval before making any purchases.

Step 1: Obtain Approval

Work with your Faculty Advisor to confirm the purchase, identify the funding source, and obtain the appropriate Worktag.

Step 2: Submit Purchase Request

Once approved, send the Travel & Procurement Coordinator:

- A direct link to the item(s), or
- Vendor information and pricing details if a link is not available

The TPC will initiate the purchasing process and notify you of the request status (e.g., pending, processed, or if additional information is needed). Do not make any purchases yourself unless explicitly instructed to do so by the TPC. In most cases, the university will purchase items on your behalf. In limited situations, you may be approved to purchase items independently after receiving confirmation.

Step 3: After Purchase

After the item is received or the purchase is completed:

- Contact the TPC to confirm receipt and complete processing in Workday
- Submit any required documentation
- Provide itemized receipts for any approved purchases

Purchases cannot be finalized in Workday until all required documentation is submitted. Delays may impact processing or funding availability.

Program & Institutional Policies

Absences

Students in the Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD Program are expected to attend all scheduled class sessions and program-related activities as part of their academic and professional responsibilities. Because the program emphasizes applied, discussion-based, and hands-on learning, regular attendance is essential to student success.

If a student must miss a class, they are expected to notify the course instructor in advance whenever possible. If advance notice is not feasible, the student must follow up as soon as possible and may be required to provide documentation of extenuating circumstances.

Repeated or unexcused absences may negatively affect a student's academic progress and standing in the program. In cases where patterns of absence raise concerns about a student's ability to meet program expectations or fully engage in required training, the program may initiate corrective actions, which may include formal review, additional requirements, or a retention plan. Continued failure to meet attendance expectations may result in academic probation or dismissal from the program. Students who anticipate that they may not be able to maintain enrollment due to extended or ongoing circumstances should apply for a Special Leave of Absence (SLOA).

Changing Your Faculty Advisor

In rare cases, students may wish to change their Faculty Advisor. To request a change, the student must submit a written petition to the HFC faculty committee explaining the reason for the request. Faculty Advisors may also initiate this process.

Students are strongly encouraged to discuss the request in advance with their current Faculty Advisor and the Program Directors. Because tuition waivers are allocated to faculty members rather than individual students, both the current Advisor and the prospective Advisor must approve the change. The prospective Advisor must also have available funding to support the student, either through a program-allocated tuition waiver or an alternative funding source (e.g., a grant).

Prior to submitting a petition, the student must obtain written approval from both their

current Faculty Advisor and the prospective Advisor. Petitions submitted without this documentation will not be reviewed by the HFC faculty committee. Students may submit no more than one petition to change advisors per academic year.

Communication

UCF uses email as the official means of notifying students of important university business and academic information concerning registration, deadlines, financial assistance, scholarships, student accounts (including tuition and fees), academic progress and problems, and many other critical items for satisfactory completion of a UCF degree program. The university sends all business-related and academic messages to a student's campus email address to ensure that there is one repository for that information. Every student must register for and maintain a campus email account and check it regularly to avoid missing important and critical information from the university. Any difficulty with establishing an account or with accessing an established account must be resolved through the UCF Computer Services Service Desk so that a student receives all important messages.

Additionally, each student must have an up-to-date emergency e-mail address and cell phone number by which they can be reached in case of a crisis on campus. This emergency contact information will be used only for emergency purposes. Also, both permanent and local mailing addresses must be on the record, so that any physical documents that must be mailed can be delivered.

It is critical that students maintain and regularly check their email account for official announcements and notifications. Communications sent to the campus email address on record will be deemed adequate notice for all university communication, including issues related to academics, finances, registration, parking, and all other matters. The University does not accept responsibility if official communication fails to reach a student who has not registered for, or maintained and checked on a regular basis, their email account. Please ensure that this information is current and that any changes in contact information are made online through the [myUCF](#) portal.

Continuous Enrollment

Students must be enrolled for at least one semester of every three consecutive semesters in order to maintain active student status. Students who do not meet this enrollment requirement breach continuous enrollment and will be discontinued. These students must reapply for admission. Readmission is not guaranteed.

Students with extenuating circumstances that will compel them to be unenrolled for two

consecutive semesters or more may complete a Special Leave of Absence Form to petition to remain in active student status. Students who are in dissertation hours should apply for a Special Leave of Absence when they cannot enroll in every semester (including summer). This form must be submitted no later than the end of the add/drop period of the third semester of non-enrollment. See the Special Leave of Absence section for more details.

International students must be enrolled every fall and spring semester. For students in this category, a Special Leave of Absence is only available for documented medical reasons.

A student without an approved Special Leave of Absence who breaks continuous enrollment will lose the option of fulfilling the degree requirements originally listed in the student's official Program of Study and will instead fulfill the degree requirements listed in the graduate catalog in effect at the time the student resumes their attendance, if they are granted readmittance to the program.

Harassment

Discrimination on the basis of race, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital status, parental status, veterans' status, sexual orientation, or genetic information is prohibited.

Sexual harassment, a form of sex discrimination, is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature including any of these three situations.

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or enrollment. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or enrollment decisions affecting such individual. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or enrollment, or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment.
- Sexual harassment is strictly prohibited. Occurrences will be dealt with in accordance with university guidelines and rules. Employees, students, or applicants for employment or admission may obtain further information on this policy, including grievance procedures, from the ONAC Coordinator.

The Director of the Office of Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance is the campus Equity Coordinator responsible for concerns in all areas of discrimination. The

office is located on the main campus, in Barbara Ying CMMS Building 81, Suite 101. The phone number is (407) 823-1336. Policies and guidelines are available on the Office of Nondiscrimination & Accommodations website.

Incomplete Grades

A grade of "I" (incomplete) is assigned by the instructor when a student is unable to complete a course due to extenuating circumstances, and when all requirements can clearly be completed in a short time following the close of regular classes. In all circumstances where an "I" grade is received, the student and faculty member must complete an agreement form that specifies how and when the incomplete grade will be made up. This agreement form is submitted with the instructor grade rolls at the end of the semester, and a copy of this agreement is given to the college for further follow-up.

For those students on financial assistance, the incomplete (I) must be made up by the agreement date. Failure to complete course requirements by that date may, at the discretion of the instructor, result in the assignment of an "F" grade, or a "U" grade for thesis, dissertation, or research report hours. It is the student's responsibility to arrange with the instructor for the change of the "I" grade.

Grades of "I" must be resolved within one calendar year or prior to graduation, whichever comes first. An "incomplete" in regular course work left unresolved will be changed to "F" if not changed in the allowed time period, and this time period may be sooner for those receiving financial assistance. The exception to this is enrollment in dissertation hours where the incomplete grade will be allowed to continue until graduation.

UCF fellowship students cannot receive fellowship funds while holding "incomplete" grades and have thirty days from the issuance of the Incomplete to remedy it in order to continue to receive fellowship funds.

Non-Discrimination & Accommodations Compliance

The University of Central Florida values a diverse community of students, faculty, and staff and is committed to fostering a respectful and inclusive learning environment. All members of the university community are expected to contribute to a culture of respect in classrooms, research environments, and campus activities.

UCF complies with all applicable federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Title IX. Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual harassment,

sexual misconduct, sexual violence, and retaliation. Students who experience or witness conduct that may violate university policy are encouraged to access available support resources and reporting options. Resources are available through [Let's Be Clear](#) and [Student Care Services](#).

For additional information regarding nondiscrimination policies, accessibility, or complaint processes, students may contact:

- [Office of Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance](#) or ONAC@ucf.edu
- [Student Accessibility Services](#) or SAS@ucf.edu
- [Student Complaints and Appeals](#)
- [University Compliance and Ethics](#) or ComplianceandEthics@ucf.edu
- [Ombuds Office](#)

Requesting Accommodations

To request accommodations, students should register with [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#), which coordinates the accommodation process. After registering, students will be connected with an SAS advisor who will work with them to understand their individual needs and determine appropriate accommodations.

The SAS advisor will guide students through the administrative process and, once accommodations are approved, will provide official documentation outlining the approved accommodations. Students should share this documentation with their instructors and work with them to ensure accommodations are implemented.

Students are encouraged to begin this process as early as possible, as accommodations are not applied retroactively and may take time to implement. Open communication with SAS, faculty, and program staff is important to ensure that approved accommodations are in place when needed.

Accommodations are designed to provide equitable access to coursework and program activities and does not alter essential academic or program requirements. The program is committed to supporting students throughout this process and to fostering an inclusive environment that recognizes disability as an important aspect of human diversity.

Professional Conduct/Ethics Statement

Students in the HFC Program shall abide by the [APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct](#), and by the [UCF Student Code of Contact](#). Ethical conduct issues include responsibility to the public, conduct of research, dissemination of information, confidentiality, and academic honesty.

Students are advised that it is wise to discuss and have agreements regarding roles, responsibilities and publication credit prior to engaging in collaborative research. The authorship of dissertation and dissertations should reflect the student's primary responsibility for the project (i.e., students should be the first author). However, students may choose to relinquish their right to first authorship. For example, they may decide not to publish their findings in a timely manner yet make arrangements with a collaborator to do so. In any case, publication credit is assigned to those who have contributed to a publication in proportion to their professional contributions as detailed in the APA Publication Manual 6th edition.

Any student suspected of violating any of the APA ethical principles, including treatment of research participants and any incidents of plagiarism, will be evaluated by the HFC faculty committee and may be grounds for dismissal from the program. The HFC faculty committee will evaluate and decide on any remediation action as a consequence of ethical violations.

Program GPA

The Program GPA is the primary metric used to evaluate academic progress. Graduate students must maintain a minimum 3.0 Program GPA to remain in good standing, receive financial assistance, and qualify for graduation. This requirement cannot be waived.

A Program GPA is calculated based on all courses completed within the approved Program of Study since admission. Courses taken at UCF prior to admission may be included only if approved as transfer credits. Grades earned during readmission to the same program are also included in the Program GPA.

If a student's Program GPA falls below 3.0, the College of Graduate Studies (CGS) will automatically place the student on academic probation. Students will have up to 18 credit hours of graded coursework to raise their GPA to at least 3.0. Unsatisfactory performance may also be indicated by a grade of "U" in graduate coursework.

Special Leave of Absence

Students who anticipate that they may not be able to enroll continuously due to external

circumstances should apply for a Special Leave of Absence. For students taking classes, the [Special Leave of Absence form](#) must be submitted no later than the end of the add/drop period of the third semester of non-enrollment. For doctoral candidates, the Special Leave of Absence form must be submitted no later than the end of the add/drop period of the term of non-enrollment.

Students may request up to 6 semesters of non-enrollment for each program the student is pursuing. If the student is active in multiple degree programs, approved leave requests will be applied uniformly to all active programs. Time spent in a Special Leave of Absence can add a maximum of 3 terms (1 academic year) to the total time limitation for the degree.

To qualify for a Special Leave of Absence, the student must demonstrate good cause (e.g., illness, family issues, financial difficulties, personal circumstances, recent maternity/paternity, employment issues). The specific reason for the Leave of Absence request must be indicated by the student on the Special Leave of Absence form. A Special Leave of Absence will be granted only after approval from the Program Directors for the student's program of study and the College of Graduate Studies (and UCF Global for international students, when applicable).

Due to current U.S. government regulations, international students must be enrolled every fall and spring semester. For students in this category, a Special Leave of Absence is only available for documented medical reasons.

If a student fails to enroll in the semester following the last term in the approved Special Leave of Absence, the student will fail to maintain continuous enrollment and must apply for readmission to the university.

7-Year Rule and Completion Plan

The University of Central Florida requires all graduate students to complete their degrees within seven years (21 semesters - Fall/Spring/Summer) from the start of their program.

Students who have not completed their degree after five years of graduate study are required to submit a 7-Year Rule Completion Plan outlining their timeline to degree completion. This plan should include remaining coursework, major milestones, and projected dissertation progress. The plan must be developed in consultation with the student's Faculty Advisor and approved by Program Directors.

The Completion Plan is submitted through a dynamic form located on the College of Sciences Forms and References page. Students are responsible for ensuring that the

form is completed accurately and submitted in a timely manner. Failure to submit a required completion plan may result in a registration hold.

If a student's timeline changes, an updated Completion Plan must be submitted to reflect the revised schedule.

Students who are unlikely to complete their degree within the 21-semester limit must work with their Faculty Advisor and Program Director to develop a realistic extended timeline and submit a formal 7-Year Rule petition to the Graduate Appeals Committee. This petition must include documentation supporting extenuating circumstances that have impacted progress.

Failure to complete degree requirements within the approved timeframe may result in dismissal from the program in accordance with university policy.

Academic Performance

Student progress in the Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD Program is evaluated through both program-level and university-level processes. This section explains how academic performance is reviewed, what is required to remain in good standing, and the steps that may be taken if progress falls below program expectations.

HFC Student Annual Review

Each graduate student participates in an annual review at the end of each Summer semester, conducted by the student's Faculty Advisor and, when appropriate, in consultation with HFC faculty. The purpose of the review is to evaluate progress, recognize accomplishments, and identify areas for continued development.

The review is completed through a Dynamic form and includes a structured self-assessment submitted by the student, followed by Faculty Advisor evaluation and feedback. Students receive a finalized copy for their records. The annual review is used for program assessment and student development and must be completed accurately and thoughtfully.

Based on the outcome of the review, the program may determine that additional support is needed. This may include the development of a retention plan or in cases of insufficient progress, potential dismissal from the program.

Academic Progress Review

In addition to program-level review, the College of Graduate Studies conducts a formal review of academic progress at the end of each semester. This review evaluates Program GPA, completed coursework, and overall progress toward degree requirements.

Students who do not meet university or program standards for academic progress or professional conduct may be placed on probation or subject to dismissal.

Retention Plans

Retention plans are used as a proactive support tool, a formal requirement during Academic Probation, and a guide for students returning from an approved extended absence.

When a student is not meeting expectations in coursework, research, or overall progress, the program may implement a retention plan to support the student in returning to expected academic progress. This determination is based on a review of the student's performance by HFC faculty and may be initiated following concerns raised by the Faculty Advisor or through faculty discussion. In some cases, a retention plan is used as an early intervention to address concerns before formal academic action is required.

Each retention plan provides a clear and structured path forward. The plan outlines the concerns identified; documents prior efforts made by the program to support the student and establishes specific expectations for improvement. These expectations may include retaking courses, completing remedial work, meeting research or program milestones, or maintaining regular engagement with the Faculty Advisor. Plans include defined goals, sub-goals, and timelines for completion to help the student return to appropriate progress.

Students are informed of their status and work with their Faculty Advisor and program leadership to understand the expectations and timeline for returning to good academic standing. Students are also given the opportunity to provide context or describe any extenuating circumstances that may have impacted their progress, which may be considered in the development of the retention plan. If concerns remain about the outcome or expectations established, students may pursue further review through the University's formal appeal process, as outlined in [Appeals \(UCF Policy 4-412\)](#).

Retention plans are also implemented for students returning from an approved leave of absence (e.g., Special Leave of Absence, medical withdrawal, or parental leave). In these cases, the plan is not related to unsatisfactory performance but instead functions as a structured timeline adjustment to support reentry into the program. The plan establishes an updated schedule for completing coursework, research, and program milestones.

Retention plans are developed by program leadership in consultation with the student's Faculty Advisor and are reviewed and approved by program faculty. Once finalized, the plan is routed via Docusign for student acknowledgment and maintained in program records. Program initiated retention plans are internal documents and do not appear on the student's official transcript.

Failure to meet the conditions outlined in a retention plan may result in further academic action, including academic probation or dismissal, in accordance with program and university policies.

Academic Probation

Academic probation is a formal academic status issued by the College of Graduate Studies (CGS) when a student does not meet established academic performance standards. This status is recorded on the student's advising transcript and indicates that the student must meet specific conditions to remain enrolled in the program. Students may be placed on academic probation through two pathways: automatic placement by the College of Graduate Studies following the Academic Progress Review, or recommendation by the program based on concerns related to academic or professional progress.

Students whose program GPA falls below 3.0 but remains at or above 2.0 will be automatically placed on academic probation by CGS. The College of Graduate Studies will notify both the student and the program of probationary status. Students are given up to 18 credit hours of graded coursework to raise their program GPA to at least 3.0. During this period, the program will develop a retention plan outlining the specific conditions, timelines, and expectations required for the student to return to good academic standing. If a student does not meet these conditions within the approved timeframe, the student will be dismissed by CGS in accordance with university policy.

The program may also recommend academic probation in cases of unsatisfactory academic or professional progress, including unsuccessful completion of major projects, failure to meet program milestones, or persistent performance concerns. In such cases, the program will submit a request to the College of Graduate Studies to initiate probationary status. CGS will review the request and notify both the student and the program of the final decision. As with CGS-initiated probation, this status will be reflected on the student's advising transcript.

Students are informed of their probationary status and work with their Faculty Advisor and program leadership to understand the expectations and timeline for returning to good academic standing. Students are also given the opportunity to provide context or describe any extenuating circumstances that may have contributed to their academic performance, which may be considered in the development of the associated retention plan. If concerns remain regarding the probation decision or the conditions required for continued enrollment, students may pursue further review through the University's formal appeal processes, as outlined in [Appeals \(UCF Policy 4-412\)](#)

Academic probation is intended to provide a structured opportunity for students to return to good academic standing. Successful completion of the conditions outlined in the retention plan allows the student to continue progressing in the program. Failure to meet these conditions may result in dismissal, in accordance with program and university policies.

Dismissal

Dismissal from the program may occur when a student fails to meet academic performance standards, does not satisfy the conditions of a retention plan or academic probation, or fails to demonstrate satisfactory progress toward degree completion. Dismissal may be initiated either by the College of Graduate Studies or by the program, depending on the circumstances.

The College of Graduate Studies may initiate dismissal in cases where a student does not meet university-level academic requirements, such as failure to raise the Program GPA to at least 3.0 within the required probationary timeframe or when the student cannot mathematically achieve the minimum GPA required before graduation. In such cases, dismissal is processed by CGS, and both the student and program are formally notified. Dismissals initiated by CGS may not be eligible for appeal.

The program may also recommend dismissal based on concerns related to academic performance, progress toward degree milestones, or professional conduct. This may include, but is not limited to, failure to meet the conditions of a retention plan, unsuccessful completion of required coursework or program milestones, or ongoing concerns regarding professional or ethical responsibilities. In these cases, program faculty will review the students' performance and vote on a recommendation for dismissal. A formal request is then submitted to CGS, which conducts a final review and notifies the student and program of the decision.

Students being considered for program-initiated dismissal will be informed of the concerns and may be given the opportunity to provide relevant context or describe extenuating circumstances prior to a final decision. In these cases, students may pursue further review through the University's formal appeal processes, as outlined in [Appeals \(UCF Policy 4-412\)](#).

Readmission

Students who are dismissed from the program have limited options for continuing their studies at UCF. These may include:

- Appeal for retention in the following semester
- Reapplication to the same program
- Application to a different graduate program

Appeals for retention must be submitted within the semester following dismissal and

must include justification for readmission and a proposed retention plan. If approved, the student may return under defined conditions. Failure to meet those conditions will result in dismissal without further opportunity for retention.

Students may also choose to reapply to the program through the standard admissions process. In this case, the student must submit a new application, including all required materials. If readmitted, the original dismissal will remain on the student's transcript, and the student may be required to follow a retention plan or other conditions to regain regular graduate status.

Students are encouraged to consult with their Faculty Advisor or the Program Directors to understand available options, timelines, and expectations for returning to the program. Students seeking review of a dismissal decision should refer to [Appeals \(UCF Policy 4-412\)](#) for information on formal appeal procedures and applicable deadlines.

Student Academic Appeals

The Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD Program is committed to maintaining a respectful, professional, and equitable environment for all members of the program. The program recognizes that conflicts and concerns may arise despite best efforts to maintain a positive and professional environment. While many concerns can be resolved informally through direct communication, students may pursue a formal appeal when necessary to request review of an academic decision.

Academic appeals are governed by [UCF Policy 4-412 \(Student Academic Appeals\)](#) and are used when a student believes that an academic decision affecting their grade, standing, or progress was made incorrectly or not in accordance with established policy. Academic appeals fall into two main categories. Grade appeals address final course grades, while academic program appeals address decisions related to a student's progress or standing in the program.

Grade Appeals

Grade appeals apply only to the final course grade and not to individual assignments. Students must first attempt to resolve the issue through an informal appeal, which typically consists of contacting the course instructor (e.g., via email from the student's UCF account) to describe the concern and request reconsideration. This must occur within 20 business days of the grade being posted, and the instructor is expected to respond within 10 business days.

If the issue is not resolved through this informal process, the student may initiate a formal grade appeal. Formal appeals are submitted through the official UCF process outlined in [Policy 4-412](#) and require completion of the designated [Qualtrics form](#), along with supporting documentation. A formal appeal must be submitted within 40 business days of the final grade posting or within 10 business days of receiving the instructor's response, whichever occurs first.

The appeal must demonstrate a valid basis, such as deviation from the grading policy outlined in the syllabus, failure to follow university policy, or evidence that the grade was influenced by non-academic factors. Appeals are reviewed at the department level and may proceed to higher levels only if new information is provided or a procedural error is identified. Final decisions at the university level are binding and not subject to further appeal.

Formal appeal forms and submission instructions are available through the official

UCF Policy 4-412 on the [UCF Policies and Procedures](#).

Academic Program Appeals

Academic program appeals apply to decisions related to a student's academic standing or progress in the program, including actions such as probation, dismissal, or other program-level determinations. Students must first attempt to resolve the issue through an informal appeal, which typically involves contacting the appropriate program representative (e.g., Program Director) in writing to explain the situation and request reconsideration. This must occur within 10 business days of being notified of the decision, and the program will respond in writing within 10 business days.

If the concern is not resolved, the student may initiate a formal program appeal. Formal appeals are submitted through the official UCF process outlined in [Policy 4-412](#) using the designated [Qualtrics form](#). The appeal must be submitted within 5 business days of receiving the program's decision and must demonstrate that relevant information was not previously considered or that a procedural error occurred.

Appeals are reviewed at the college level and may proceed to a final level of review by the College of Graduate Studies or the Provost's designee. Decisions made at the final level are binding and not subject to further appeal.

Formal appeal forms and submission instructions are available through the official [UCF Policy 4-412](#) page on the [UCF Policies and Procedures](#) website.

Student Support Services

The University of Central Florida provides a wide range of services to support students' academic success, well-being, and overall experience. Additional information about these services is available through the Graduate Catalog and UCF website.

Graduate Student Center (GSC)

The [Graduate Student Center](#) offers dedicated space for graduate students, including study areas, reservable meeting rooms, and programming designed to support community building and professional development. Located in Trevor Colbourn Hall, the GSC serves as a central hub for graduate student engagement.

Student Health Services

The [Student Health Services](#) provides medical care for common illnesses and injuries, as well as preventive services including immunizations, physical exams, and health screenings.

Recreation and Wellness Center

The [Recreation and Wellness Center](#) offers fitness facilities, group exercise classes, outdoor recreation spaces, and wellness programming to support students' physical health and well-being.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#) provides confidential mental health support, including counseling, crisis services, and resources to help students manage stress, anxiety, and other challenges.

Accessibility Services (SAS)

[Student Accessibility Services](#) provides accommodation and support for students with disabilities to ensure equitable access to academic programs and university resources.

UCF Career Services

[UCF Career Services](#) offers career planning support, including resume and CV development, job search strategies, and professional skill-building workshops.

Student Legal Services

[Student Legal Services](#) provides legal consultations and representation for eligible students in select civil matters, along with referrals when needed.

UCF Global (International and Scholar Services)

[UCF Global](#) supports international students through immigration advising, cultural programming, and resources for navigating university life.

Research Labs

The Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD program stands out for the scope and interconnectedness of its research. Faculty work spans foundational cognitive processes - such as attention, memory, and decision-making - to applied domains including virtual and augmented reality, human-AI systems, transportation, aging, and even law and digital deception.

What makes the program especially strong is the way these areas come together. Across labs, students engage in collaborative, interdisciplinary work using tools like eye tracking, neuroimaging, and immersive simulation to study behavior in complex, real-world contexts. Supported by highly published, externally funded faculty, this environment offers students the opportunity to contribute to impactful research while building a competitive and versatile skill set.

Adult Development and Decision Lab (ADD)

The [Adult Development and Decision Lab](#) studies human decision making and associated neural mechanisms across adulthood. Some of the changes to decision making in aging are the result of biological processes, others stem from psychological and social processes, but many can be attributed to an interaction of these factors. To understand these complex mechanisms, the lab utilizes an array of methods including cognitive tasks, manipulations of emotion and task difficulty, biomarker sampling, computational modeling, and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI).

Director: [Dr. Nichole Lighthall](#)

Applied Cognition and Aging Lab (ACAL)

The [Applied Cognition and Aging Lab](#) focuses on understanding the perceptual and cognitive processes that guide human behavior throughout the lifespan. Using that knowledge, we then devise strategies to augment human performance in a variety of “every day” (and not so “every day”) tasks and situations, generally through training interventions and technological supplementation. The lab utilizes a number of experimental techniques including traditional behavioral paradigms, eye tracking, virtual reality, driving simulation, and neuroimaging.

Director: [Dr. Mark Neider](#)

Applied Cognition and Technology Lab (ACAT)

The [Applied Cognition and Technology Lab](#) is a collaboration between a cognitive psychologist and a social psychologist. Research examines human interactions with intelligent non-humans, including robots, computers, and animals. Anthropomorphism and its implications for design are a key part of this research.

Director: [Dr. Valerie Sims](#)

Attention and Memory Lab

The [Attention and Memory Lab](#) focuses on the interaction of visual working memory, long term memory, attention and oculomotor control. To guide attention throughout the world in a goal-directed way; to pick up your coffee mug for example, we must maintain some mental representation of the object to match visual information in peripheral vision. We investigate this interactive process from a multitude of theoretical and methodological directions by integrating eye tracking with event-related potentials, allowing us to investigate the behavioral, oculomotor, and neural instantiations of memory and attentional processes. By better understanding how memory representations interact with attentional processes, we hope to gain insights into how these processes are integrated into our broader cognitive function.

Director: [Dr. Joseph Schmidt](#)

Technology, Humans, and Environment Lab (THE)

Technology, Humans, and Environment (THE) Lab explores how people interact with technological systems in increasingly complex environments. By integrating cognitive theory with advanced techniques such as eye tracking, virtual reality, and computational modeling, we investigate the mechanisms that drive human performance in the modern world. Our research addresses challenges at the intersection of technology, humans and their environments, spanning domains such as digital exploitation, healthcare, and virtual reality. We aim to provide evidence-based insights that can help develop systems that are more intuitive, effective, and safer for humans. Our philosophy is that humans should be at the center of technological innovation, and that systems should be designed with human capabilities and limitations, in mind.

Director: [Dr. Dawn Sarno](#)

The Law, Applied Memory, and Psychology Lab (LAMP)

The Law, Applied Memory, and Psychology Lab investigates how human memory operates in complex, real-world contexts, particularly within the criminal legal system. We are an interdisciplinary, collaborative research group bridging psychology, law, and criminal justice. Using a multi-method approach, including experimental studies, surveys, and field research, we address applied questions with the goal of developing and promoting evidence-based solutions. Our current work explores the intersection of memory and technology, examining how people perceive and remember AI-generated faces and how law enforcement agencies use facial recognition tools.

Director: [Dr. Rachel Greenspan](#)

Minds in Technology, Machines in Thought Lab (MIT²)

The [Minds in Technology, Machines in Thought Lab](#) focuses on issues of stress, workload and fatigue in dynamic, hazardous environments with particular attention to military applications. It is a virtual research lab, including the MIT² Labs at the University of Central Florida, the Cognitive Sciences Lab at George Mason University, Linköping University, and the Florida Institute of Technology. The MIT² affiliate labs at UCF include the MURI Lab, the Transportation Research Group (TRG), and the Center for Applied Human Factors in Aviation (CAHFA). The Laboratory works under a DOD research grant titled “Mitigating Stress, Workload, and Fatigue in the Electronic Battlefield.” Along with assistance from the Army Research Lab, the Army Research Institute, the Army Research Office, and the other affiliated research labs maintained by the U.S. Department of Defense, we hope to make great strides towards understanding and alleviating some of the stressors that are encountered by today’s infantry forces.

Director: [Dr. Peter A Hancock](#)

Performance Research Lab (PeRL)

The [Performance Research Lab](#) is involved in research on performance, workload, and stress associated with performance of cognitive tasks. Both group and individual differences are investigated in research on human performance. Of particular interest is the interaction between the characteristics (trait and state) of individuals and the characteristics of the tasks they perform.

Director: [Dr. James Szalma](#)

Team Performance Lab (TPL)

The [Team Performance Lab](#) specializes in basic and applied principles of both individual and team performance, processes, and training in a number of military and civilian domains including aviation and human-robot interaction. Current projects include, (a) in aviation, we are currently investigating Crew Resource Management (CRM) training and examining how it has been applied in different domains over the years with the overall goal of providing the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) with valuable information for augmenting CRM guidelines, principles, procedures and tools, (b), in human-robot interaction, we are currently conducting research relevant to autonomy, shared mental models, situation awareness, and guided discovery learning in mixed human-robot teams for the Robotics Collaborative Technology Alliance (RCTA).

Director: [Dr. Florian Jentsch](#)

Transportation Research Group (TRG)

The [Transportation Research Group](#) conducts applied research aimed at improving safety and efficiency across surface, aviation, and aerospace transportation systems. The lab is structured into three specialized divisions: surface transportation, aviation/aerospace, and neurolinguistics. Each division includes both graduate and undergraduate researchers.

TRG research explores a wide range of topics, including individual differences in driving and unmanned aircraft system (UAS) operation, high-risk and aggressive driving behavior, in-vehicle navigational systems, operator workload and fatigue, trust in automated systems, and language processing in monolingual and bilingual individuals. The lab's work contributes to a deeper understanding of human interaction with complex transportation systems. Research findings from TRG have been presented at numerous professional conferences, including the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society (HFES) Annual Meeting, the International Symposium for Aviation Psychology (ISAP), the Applied Human Factors and Ergonomics (AHFE) Conference, the American Psychological Association (APA) Conference, the Southeastern Psychological Association (SEPA) Conference, and the Southeastern Human Factors Applied Research Conference (SHARC).

Director: [Dr. Mustapha Mouloua](#)

Virtual Avatar and Agent Interaction Lab (VAAIL)

The [Virtual Avatar and Agent Interaction Lab](#) brings together psychologists, human–computer interaction researchers, and virtual reality enthusiasts to explore the future of immersive technologies. Our work focuses on designing and evaluating innovative virtual and augmented reality applications through a human-centered lens. By studying how people experience and interact with immersive environments, we aim to uncover principles that guide the development of effective, engaging, and meaningful virtual experiences. We are especially interested in human–avatar interaction: how digital characters that represent users in virtual reality can shape experiences, communication, and behavior. To study these questions, VAAIL is equipped with modern technology, including physiological sensors and motion-tracking systems for capturing both psychological and biomechanical processes. Our research is at the intersection of psychology, technology, and human-computer interaction.

Director: [Dr. Martin Kocur](#)

Other Research Opportunities

UCF IMMERSE

[UCF IMMERSE](#) is a state-of-the-art research facility at UCF focused on studying human behavior in realistic, immersive environments. The facility supports interdisciplinary research across areas such as perception, attention, navigation, and performance using advanced tools including virtual and augmented reality, eye tracking, physiological measurement, and mobile neuroimaging systems.

These technologies can be integrated to study behavior across a wide range of environments, tasks, and social contexts, allowing researchers to capture a comprehensive view of human performance in both individual and group settings. IMMERSE is used by faculty and research groups across the university, providing students with opportunities to engage in collaborative, technology-driven research that bridges cognitive science and real-world application.

Director: [Dr. Mark Neider](#)

Institute for Simulation and Training (IST)

The [Institute for Simulation and Training](#) is an internationally recognized research center focused on simulation, modeling, training, and virtual environments. Located in the Central Florida Research Park adjacent to UCF, IST collaborates with government,

industry, and academic partners and provides research, training, and employment opportunities for graduate students in a rapidly growing field.

Faculty and Staff

The HFC program is supported by a collaborative community of faculty and staff dedicated to student success and research development. Faculty expertise reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the field, spanning foundational cognitive processes - such as attention, memory, perception, and decision-making - alongside applied work in immersive environments, human-AI systems, legal contexts, and complex real-world settings.

Through cross-disciplinary collaboration and active engagement in research, publishing, and professional service, faculty provide students with exposure to diverse perspectives and approaches while supporting individualized research paths within the program.

Faculty

Greenspan, Rachel, PhD



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Dr. Rachel Leigh Greenspan is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Central Florida. She earned her PhD in Psychology and Social Behavior from the University of California, Irvine, and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Quattrone Center for the Fair Administration of Justice at the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School. Her research takes an applied, interdisciplinary, and multi-method approach to studying questions at the intersection of psychology, criminal justice, and the law. Her main research interests focus on the development and downstream consequences of memory errors, particularly in the criminal legal system. Her current work examines how artificial intelligence is increasingly supplementing or replacing human memory in applied contexts, exploring questions about the use of AI-generated faces in police lineups and the accuracy of facial recognition technologies. She also investigates issues in research methodology, including how social scientists design, conduct, and report upon the results of their research.

Hancock, Peter, D.Sc., PhD



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Dr. Peter Hancock is a Provost's Distinguished Research Professor, Pegasus Professor, and University Trustee Chair at the University of Central Florida, with joint appointments across Psychology, Engineering, and the Institute for Simulation and Training. His research examines human performance in complex systems, with a focus on how stress, workload, fatigue, and environmental demands influence attention, decision-making, and behavior in high-risk, real-world domains such as aviation, transportation, and defense. He is a highly prolific scholar, with over 700 publications and extensive external funding from agencies such as NSF, NIH, NASA, and the Department of Defense. Dr. Hancock is also a Fellow and past President of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society and a recognized leader in the field, with a long-standing record of contributions to research and professional service.

Jentsch, Florian, PhD



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Florian Jentsch, Ph.D., is Professor of Psychology with a joint appointment at the Institute for Simulation & Training (IST). He served as Chair of the Department of Psychology from 2017-2025. Dr. Jentsch holds a Ph.D. (1997) in Human Factors Psychology, in addition to graduate degrees in Aeronautical Science and Aeronautical Engineering. Dr. Jentsch has been directing UCF's Team Performance Laboratory since 2001, where he studies teams, training, and human-technology interaction. His research has been supported by over \$8 million (his individual credit) in contracts and grants from the FAA, NSF, U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Dr. Jentsch has recently been PI or co-PI on projects related to human-robot interaction and teaming for the U.S. Army and on pilot training and performance for the FAA. He has published several books and co-authored over 250 articles, conference proceedings, and presentations. Dr. Jentsch has regularly taught the doctoral research methods courses for all three doctoral programs in the Department of Psychology, and

he has been chair of 20 completed doctoral dissertations, and was Associate Dean for Research in the College of Sciences.

Kocur, Martin, PhD



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Dr. Martin Kocur is an Assistant Professor in the Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD program at the University of Central Florida's Department of Psychology. He holds a B.A. in Media Informatics and Information Science and an M.Sc. of Media Informatics from the University of Regensburg in Germany. Before coming to the University of Central Florida, Dr. Kocur worked as an Assistant Professor in the Department Digital Media at the University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria in Austria, where he focused on game design and immersive applications. The goal of his research is to better understand how changing the self-perception using virtual avatars can be leveraged to positively influence users' performance and experience while interacting with immersive virtual worlds. Dr. Kocur's lab utilizes motion capture technology to create embodied experiences and induce body ownership illusions to study the effects of avatars using different methodological approaches including physical and cognitive tasks, physiological measures such as heart rate and skin temperature, and behavioral outcomes.

Lighthall, Nichole, PhD



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Dr. Nichole Lighthall is an Associate Professor of Psychology in the Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD Program. She holds a B.A. in psychology from the University of California, Berkeley and a PhD in gerontology from the University of Southern California. Before coming to the University of Central Florida, Dr. Lighthall worked as a postdoc in the Center for Cognitive Neuroscience at Duke University and was a postdoctoral fellow in the Duke Center for the Study of Aging and Human Development. The goal of her research is to develop a neural model of decision processing in human aging that can be used to identify age-related vulnerabilities and

pathways to compensation. She is particularly interested in how age-related changes to cognitive and affective components of decision-making impact decision processing and quality. In conducting this research, the Lighthall Lab utilizes a diverse array of methodological approaches, including behavioral manipulations, biomarker measurement, functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), computational modeling, and functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS). Her work is supported by NIH, DOD, and the Florida Department of Health. She currently serves as the lead PI for the Florida Consortium to Reduce Misinformation and Exploitation in Alzheimer's Disease. She also Co-Directs the NIA-funded Scientific Research Network on Decision Neuroscience & Aging.

Mouloua, Mustapha, PhD



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Dr. Mustapha Mouloua is the Director of the Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology PhD Program at the University of Central Florida. He earned his M.A. and PhD in Applied/Experimental Psychology from The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., where he also served as a research fellow at the Cognitive Science Laboratory from 1992 to 1994. Since joining UCF in 1994, Dr. Mouloua has established a distinguished career in research and teaching. His scholarly interests include attention and human performance, cognitive aging, automation, driver distraction, older driver assessment, and aviation psychology. Dr. Mouloua has authored/co-authored over 140 publications and 300 professional presentations at academic conferences across local, national, and international. His work has also been featured in 42 interviews from media outlets.

Neider, Mark, PhD



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Dr. Mark Neider is a Professor and Chair of the Department of Psychology at the University of Central Florida. He earned his B.A. in Psychology from Hofstra University, and his M.A. and Ph.D. in Cognitive/Experimental Psychology from Stony

Brook University. His research focuses on attention, visual cognition, and perception, with an emphasis on understanding human behavior in realistic, complex environments such as driving.

His work bridges fundamental cognitive theory with applied human factors research, using real-world tasks to better understand how people perceive, learn, and perform in everyday environments. His lab studies behavior across the lifespan, from children to older adults, using a range of methods including behavioral paradigms, eye tracking, driving simulation, and virtual reality.

Sarno, Dawn, PhD



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Dr. Dawn Sarno is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Central Florida. She received her B.S. in Psychology from Bridgewater State University. She also holds a M.A. in Applied Experimental Human Factors Psychology and Ph.D. in Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology from the University of Central Florida. After completing her doctorate, Dr. Sarno spent five years as an Assistant Professor at Clemson University. Dr. Sarno's research focuses on the cognitive processes underlying human performance in real world tasks, such as baggage screening, radiology, and digital deception (e.g., phishing). By integrating cognitive theory with modern tools – like eye-tracking, artificial intelligence and virtual reality – her research aims to both advance our understanding of human cognition and develop interventions that can enhance user performance.

Schmidt, Joseph, PhD



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Dr. Joe Schmidt is an Associate Professor and the Associate Program Director in the Human Factors and Cognitive Psychology program. He received his PhD in Experimental & Cognitive Psychology in 2012 from Stony Brook University. After receiving his doctorate, he spent two years as a Post-doctorate Research Fellow at the

University of South Carolina's Institute for Mind and Brain. After his post-doctorate position, he spent over a year as a Research Support Specialist at SR Research.

His primary research interest focuses on the interaction of memory and attentional systems and how they affect our broader cognitive functions. By simultaneously tracking eye movements and recording EEG/ERP he can measure both overt and covert shifts of attention and relate them to the amount and intensity of memory representations. Much of his research focuses on how changes to a target representation held in memory affect our ability to guide attention to a target object in the world around us. Given that memory and attentional processes are involved in most tasks, his research interests are quite broad.

Sims, Valerie, PhD



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Dr. Valerie Sims is an Associate Professor in the Psychology Department. Her lab, the Applied Cognition and Technology (ACAT) group, studies human experiences of non-humans, including computers and animals. Dr. Sims obtained her B.A. in psychology with a concentration in cognitive studies from Carleton College in Northfield, MN. She holds an M.A. and PhD in Cognitive Psychology, as well as an interdisciplinary emphasis in human development from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Prior to coming to UCF, Dr. Sims worked for three years as an Assistant Professor at Cedar Crest College in Allentown, PA. Her primary research interests are in the areas of human-computer interaction, human-animal interaction, and individual differences in spatial ability. Some of her research has centered on the cognitive abilities of video game experts. Her teaching interests include Cognitive Psychology, Sensation and Perception, Developmental Psychology, and Research Methods. In her spare time, Dr. Sims likes to swim and play video games, and she loves to go to the beach.

Szalma, James, PhD



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Dr. James Szalma is an Associate Professor in the Psychology Department at the University of Central Florida. He received a B.S. in Chemistry from the University of Michigan in 1990 and an MA in Human Factors & Cognitive psychology in 1997 from the University of Cincinnati. He received a PhD in Human Factors & Cognitive psychology in 1999 from the University of Cincinnati. The theme for his laboratory, the Performance Research Laboratory (PeRL), is how variations in task characteristics interact with the characteristics of the person (i.e., personality, emotion, motivation) to influence performance, workload, and stress of cognitively demanding tasks. His primary research interests include signal/threat detection (e.g., friend/foe identification), training for threat detection, and how the characteristics of tasks and operators interact to influence performance in the context of tasks that require sustained attention or that include human-automation interaction. He has conducted research on the application of tasks created in a video game environment to train sustained attention using feedback in the form of knowledge of results, work that was funded by the Army Research Institute. Dr. Szalma also conducts research on the influence of motivation on performance and human-technology interaction (social media use), and on the influence of social context on performance, workload, and stress associated with monitoring tasks. He has also conducted research on the validity of Fuzzy Signal Detection Theory for performance evaluation in threat detection tasks.

Staff

Tummons, Liz



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Elizabeth (Liz) Tummons is an experienced administrative specialist dedicated to supporting students through their academic journey. She combines a detail-oriented perspective with a genuine passion for student success. She values efficient communication and aims to provide thorough assistance, meeting each student where they're at. With a background in project management studies and nearly a decade in client-focused roles, Liz takes pride in helping others navigate complex processes and believes that accessible, personalized support makes all the difference in a student's experience. Her commitment is to build a welcoming space in which every student is equipped and inspired to achieve their goals.

Program Notes

Stay Informed and Proactive

Graduate school requires independence and attentiveness. Policies, forms, and deadlines are numerous, and some may fall outside the department's control. While the faculty and staff are here to support you, it is ultimately your responsibility to stay on top of requirements. Missed deadlines or overlooked paperwork can have serious consequences, so be proactive, ask questions, and keep track of important tasks. Additionally, expect change. The Program Director role rotates every three years, Graduate Studies updates its policies, and departmental guidelines evolve. The program itself will continue to grow and adapt. Staying informed and engaged will help you navigate these transitions smoothly and ensure your success throughout your doctoral journey.

Be Familiar with UCF Policies

A strong foundation in university policies ensures a smooth academic experience. Students should familiarize themselves with the Graduate Catalog, Program Handbook, and UCF Student Handbook as they are essential resources. When questions arise, consult these materials first. If answers are not readily available, seek guidance from your Faculty Advisor, Program Directors, or program assistant to ensure compliance with university expectations.

Check Your Email

Graduate students are expected to check their email daily and promptly notify their Faculty Advisor, Program Coordinator, and Program Directors of any changes to their email address. Important program-related updates are often communicated via email, including deadlines, policies, and funding information. Group messages should never be ignored, as they may contain critical announcements. Keep in mind that the program assistant and other university staff are required to send official correspondence only to your UCF email account - failure to monitor it regularly could put your funding and program status at risk.

Attend Every Class and Come Prepared

Consistent class attendance and preparation are fundamental expectations. If an emergency arises and you need to miss a session, notify your professor in advance. If

your professor is unavailable, contact the Program Directors to discuss the situation as soon as possible. Academic engagement is key to success, and preparedness is a professional responsibility.

Engage in Research and Professional Development

From the start of the program through graduation, continuous involvement in research is expected. In addition, active participation in departmental events such as colloquia, Brown Bag sessions, faculty interviews, and new student visits enrich the academic experience. Students are encouraged to engage with the broader academic and professional community, both within the university and beyond. Opportunities include joining the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society (HFES) Student Chapter, presenting or volunteering at conferences, supporting efforts to bring guest speakers and academic events to Orlando, and participating in research forums, student competitions, and university-wide initiatives.

Embrace Your Role as a Professional

As a doctoral student, you are not just a learner - you are a professional colleague. Contributing to professional activities and maintaining a high level of professionalism is essential. You are now part of the field, no longer observing from the outside. Take advantage of the opportunities available to you: attend workshops, dissertation defenses, conferences, and professional organizations. Invest in your development and enjoy being immersed in the discipline.

Maintain Professionalism in Every Interaction

Every interaction - with professors, student colleagues, and staff - is an opportunity to represent yourself professionally. In many ways, graduate school functions like a continuous job interview. How you engage with faculty, staff, departments across UCF, and professionals in the field reflects on both you and the program as a whole. Whether corresponding with prospective students, attending academic events, or handling official matters, professionalism impacts your reputation and the quality of your degree. Approach each conversation with intention and respect.

When in Doubt, Ask

If something comes up that you're unsure about - whether it's a question, concern, or something you've heard - don't hesitate to check in with the Program Director. Reaching out directly helps ensure you have accurate information and avoids unnecessary confusion.

Advice for the Journey Ahead

Doctoral work brings new challenges, requiring thoughtful time management. The transition from undergraduate to graduate coursework can feel overwhelming, so planning ahead is essential. At times, you may feel uncertain about the depth of knowledge required or struggle to grasp the full scope of what you need to learn. That's completely normal! The good news is that faculty, staff, peers, and university resources are here to support you. We admitted you because we know you have the ability to succeed. Be prepared to work hard, listen to advice, and take advantage of the tools available to you.

Useful Links

Academic Calendar

<https://calendar.ucf.edu/>

Awards and Recognition

<https://graduate.ucf.edu/awards-and-recognition>

Counseling and Psychological Services

<https://caps.sswb.ucf.edu/>

CGS Forms and References

<https://graduate.ucf.edu/forms-and-references/>

- 7 Year Completion
- Graduate Petition
- Nomination and Appointment to Graduate Faculty Scholar
- Teaching Qualification
- Administrative Record Change
- Special Leave of Absence
- Doctoral Advisory Committee
- Dissertation Defense Announcement

CGS Graduate Catalog

<https://graduate.edu/catalog/>

CGS Graduate Teaching

<https://graduate.ucf.edu/gta-training-requirements/>

CGS Thesis and Dissertation

<https://graduate.ucf.edu/thesis-and-dissertation/>

COS Restricted Registration

<https://sciences.ucf.edu/graduate/restricted-registration-agreement-docusign-forms/>

Department of Psychology

<https://sciences.ucf.edu/psychology/>

Financial Aid Guide

<https://www.ucf.edu/financial-aid/>

HFES Student Chapter

<https://sciences.ucf.edu/psychology/hfes/>

Office of Nondiscrimination and Accommodations Compliance

<https://onac.ucf.edu/>

Student Accessibility Services

<https://access.ucf.edu/student-accessibility-services/>

UCF Global

<https://global.ucf.edu/>

Office of Graduate Services

<https://sciences.ucf.edu/graduate/>

MyUCF

<https://my.ucf.edu/public/dashboard/>

UCF Graduate Guide

<https://graduate.ucf.edu/graduate-guide/>

UCF Library

<https://library.ucf.edu/>

University Writing Center

<https://cah.ucf.edu/uwc/>