

**[DRAFT]**

## **DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

### **POLICY ON GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS AND ATTESTATION**

Every student of the Psychology Department is required to pass the State Attestation Examinations in order to be recognized as eligible for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. According to requirements of the Ministry of Education and Science of Kyrgyz Republic, every student has to take the State Exam in Psychology and carry out the Senior Thesis in accordance with all the procedures described in the present Policy. A student is not eligible to undertake the attestation requirements unless s/he has fulfilled all the requirements of the Department, including the appropriate coursework and Internship.

#### **PART I. STATE EXAM IN PSYCHOLOGY**

##### **I. Form and content of the State Exam**

The State Examination [Exam] is to take form of a set of multiple-choice questions in the key fields of knowledge acquired by the students during their studies and is to be equally representative of all the materials covered in the key academic disciplines mentioned below. Thus, the Exam is to consist of the following sections: General Psychology, Anatomy and Physiology of the Central Nervous System, Statistics and Research Methods in Psychology, Psychometrics, Abnormal Psychology. The Exam is to consist of 100 questions, each part to contain 20 questions.

##### **II. The procedure of Exam development and modification**

The Exam is developed in one version without variations. The content of each part is developed by a professor competent in the particular field of knowledge, taking into consideration current load of the full-time faculty. The final version of the Exam is to be prepared by mid-April.

The content of the final Exam questions is monitored by the Department Chair.

The Exam is modified by at least 30% each academic year in order to avoid cheating. The Exam is to be modified by 100% in cases if there are students who were taking the Exam the previous year, or in cases when the Exam content became open to students who haven't taken it due to any reasons.

##### **III. The examination and grading procedure**

The State Exam is scheduled in mid-May prior to Senior Theses Defense. The Exam lasts 2 hours, and as soon as the time is up, the students are required to finish answering questions and

hand in the filled-out answer sheet and the Exam text itself. Failing to do so in time allows the State Committee to deduct up to 10% from the student final grade, and failing to return the answer sheet within 5 minutes after the set time period is punished by not accepting the student's answer sheet.

During the Exam, the students are prohibited to use any electronic devices, the notebooks, cell phones are to be turned off, and the students are not allowed to use the headphones. The students are prohibited to take the materials of Exam out of the classroom, failure to follow this rule will be qualified as a serious academic dishonesty and followed by requirement to take the Exam next academic year.

Failure of students to attend the State Exam requires them to take the Exam in the following academic year.

#### **IV. State Exam consultations and student preparation**

The Department is required to develop the system of State Exam preparation for the senior student, which should include consultations and guidelines for preparation.

The Exam consultations are to be scheduled for the late April – early May. Consultation on each academic subject is to take at least one class. Consultations are not to be scheduled before the final content of the Exam has been determined.

It is students' responsibility to be prepared for the consultations in advance using the State Exam Study Guide. The faculty cannot be obliged to give additional consultations if the students were not prepared for the scheduled ones. The Study Guide is to be developed by faculty preparing Exam questions after the Chair approves the final questions content.

The Department is obliged to provide the students with the required literature for preparation.

## **PART II. SENIOR THESIS**

Senior Thesis [Thesis] at the Department of Psychology is a year-long empirical student-driven research project under supervision of a Department faculty member and resulting in a substantial written product. The Thesis is meant to serve as a demonstration of all required theoretical and applied knowledge in the field and qualify as the major graduation requirement for undergraduate Psychology majors, as in accordance with the Ministry of Education and Science of Kyrgyz Republic requirements and AUCA Policy on Senior Theses. The process of Thesis carrying out and defense at Psychology Department is to be conducted strictly according to the present Policy according to the procedures outlined below.

### **I. Process of topics declaration**

The topic of the Thesis is defined by a student individually in consultations with the Department faculty. The preliminary topic is to be declared to the Department during the final weeks of the Junior year using the Senior Thesis Topic Declaration Form. The proposed topics are analyzed by the Department and supervisor for each student is preliminary approved by the Chair. After the topic declaration, during the summer semester of the Junior year, a student is expected to work on their proposed topic considering the recommendations of the preliminary defined supervisor (if

any). The Theses topics are officially approved during the Fall semester of the senior year by supervisor and Department committee at a special Department meeting.

## **II. Senior Thesis Seminar I,II (STS)**

The course of STS is designed to guide senior students of the Department through the process of research conducting and writing up the final Thesis product. The courses is taught through the senior year and its syllabus assignments corresponds to the key Thesis report deadlines, to as to assist students in developing their work step-by-step. The faculty teaching STS are expected to communicate regularly with the Chair of the Department and supervisors regarding the schedules of student reports and general class progress. The syllabus of STS is to be based heavily on the present Policy in terms of the general idea of Senior Thesis, outlined procedures of it's carrying out, deadlines of progress reports, format and recommended grading criteria for final written work.

## **III. Supervising**

The Supervisor (Scientific Advisor) or a Thesis is usually a full-time faculty member of the Department. The supervisor is preliminary defined in the Spring semester of the Junior year, when the preliminary proposed topics are submitted to the Department. The Supervisor is officially approved at the moment of topics approval in the Fall of the Fall semester of the senior year. A student has a right to find a supervisor outside of the Department, with the reservation that the supervisor has to be qualified to supervise a Thesis (an MA or Candidate of Science degree in Social Sciences and research experience) and approved by the Department Chair with consultation with the faculty.

### **1. Rights and obligations of a supervisor**

Every full-time faculty member of the Department is obliged to supervise two Theses a year, with an opportunity to supervise more upon agreement. Supervision of more that two Theses is to be considered as overload and has to be approved with the VPAA.

The main responsibility of a supervisor is to guide a student in development of the Thesis topic, hypothesis, all the methodology and approaches to data analysis of the student's project. The supervisor is expected to guide the student through each step of the Thesis development and read the final version of the work. The supervisor evaluates the overall conduct, ability and effort of the students before the defense. Every supervisor is obliged to read every written component of the Thesis once and provide an extensive feedback on its content to the student. All additional work, such as repeated revision and comments on grammar and style are negotiated individually between supervisor and supervisee. The Supervisor grades the work using Supervisor Evaluation Form.

### **2. Rights and obligations of a student**

Every student has a right to negotiate the candidacy of the faculty member to supervise his/her Thesis. To do that, a student is to contact the preferred supervisor in advance as a part of the Topic Declaration procedure and secure supervisor's agreement to work on the particular topic. A student has a right to refuse to work with a particular supervisor anytime before the draft version of the Thesis is submitted to the Department.

It is a student's obligation to use the Worksheet in outlining the work with the supervisor in order to make the supervision process more transparent for evaluation and more efficient for students.

#### **IV. Second Reader**

1. The Second Reader is a scholar not affiliated directly with the Department of Psychology of AUCA, who evaluates and grades the Thesis upon its full completion. The major requirement to the Second Reader is having a graduate degree in Social Sciences or Humanities, it is preferred that the Second Reader is familiar with the topic the student has been exploring in the Thesis.
2. The Second Reader is expected to grade the Thesis according to the general criteria recommended by the Department in accordance with the standards for BA qualification papers level and comment on the student's work by means of filling out the Second Reader Evaluation Form, which is provided to the student and submitted to the Department at least a day before the Defense day. The grade given by the Second Reader composes 25% of the total student Thesis grade.
3. The senior student is required to reflect on the comments, remarks and criticism of the Second Reader in the final Defense presentation.

#### **V. The procedure of progress reports**

The Department in the beginning of every academic year determines the deadlines for the limited number of the main Thesis progress reports. The reports are provided in the form of a short presentation pointing out all the work that has been carried out by the student during a particular period of time. The reports are not graded but serve the only purpose of monitoring the progress of students and allow the students to present the current state of their work to the Department faculty to get the necessary feedback. It is a part of the workload of all the full-time faculty to participate actively in discussion of the progress reports and provide necessary feedback. The official limited list of the reports expected from every senior student is the following:

1. Report on the topic formulation, timeline of the study, hypotheses and research questions
2. Presentation of the research proposal (Research Proposal guidelines are to be provided by STS instructor)
3. Report on data collection and preliminary data analysis
4. Submission of draft version of the Thesis
5. Mock Defense
6. Submission of the final version of the Thesis
7. Senior Theses State Defense

The students are to be provided by the Schedule of Senior Thesis Progress Reports by the Department immediately after the dates are approved by and no later than two weeks before the first report deadline.

#### **VI. Mock Defense**

**Mock Defense** is a procedure designed to qualify the preparedness of senior students to defend their Theses. The procedure includes reports of the students in the form of a Power Point Presentations on the final version of their Theses, report of the Supervisors on the progress and

preparedness of the students to defend their work and general effort of the students during conducting the research, and joint decision of the Department to allow individual students to defend their Thesis.

The Student-Supervisor Working Plan is submitted to the Department by the student prior to the Mock Defense.

## **VII. Defense**

1. Senior Theses Defense at Psychology Department is an open event which is conducted to test the theoretical preparedness and mastered applied research skills of a student and ability to work independently. The Chair of State Committee opens Senior Thesis Defense with an introductory speech addressed to the Committee members and the audience. The Chair of the State Committee announces about the quorum that is an obligatory procedure to make session possible and legitimate. The Chair of the State Committee informs the audience about presence of authentic manuscripts of Senior Thesis that must be available immediately before the process of defense. The Defense is held completely in English.
2. **The procedure of Defense** for each particular Thesis consists of three main parts: presentation, official discussion, and general discussion. Senior is expected to present in intelligible manner basic ideas of the paper as well as major supportive arguments based on the principles of scientific study. The length of the presentation is 15 minutes.

Official discussion. The presentation is followed by the official discussion. The official opponent reads out a review of presenting project. In cases of absence of official opponent the Chair of the State Committee should read the review out. The senior is required to respond to the critical comments and questions that are addressed in the review. With the permission of the Committee Chair the Committee members are allowed to enter into the discussion. Senior is required to provide answers to all questions that are addressed to him/her. Only the State Committee members participate in the official debates.

General discussion. After the official debates the Chair of the State Committee opens public debates. Everybody present in the audience is allowed to take part in this discussion and question the Senior.

3. **The State Attestation Committee** mandatory includes all the full-time faculty members of the Department and at least three persons not affiliated directly with the Department. The Ministry of High Education of Kyrgyz Republic appoints the State Committee members via the suggestion of the Head of Psychology Department. The Chair of the Defense Committee is meant to be not affiliated with AUCA.

## **VIII. Format of the paper, grading criteria and procedure**

1. The excellent Thesis is expected to be at least 25 pages long, not including the title, abstract, acknowledgments pages, references and appendices. The Thesis is to be formatted in accordance with the latest standards of APA style.
2. The final grade for every Thesis is composed from 3 components: 1) Supervisor grade, which assesses the student effort and ability to work independently in conducting the study and weights 25% of the total grade; 2) Second Reader grade, which assesses the content of the final work and weights 25% of the grade; 3) State Committee grade, which assesses the

key components of the presented Thesis and weights 50% of the total grade, is determined according to State Committee Defense Grading Form. The final grade each student gets is calculated by the Committee Secretary and using Senior Thesis Grading Protocol. The Protocol is to be signed by all State Committee members.

## **IX. Obligations of the Department**

The Department of Psychology is fully responsible to organize the whole process of development and defense of Senior Theses.

1. The Department is responsible for determining the supervising load of each full-time faculty and informing students on the availability and research interests of each faculty member. In case of lack of full-time faculty to supervise the Theses, the Department is responsible for advising the students on finding their supervisors outside of the Department.
2. The Department is responsible for forming the State Attestation Committee in advance and organization of the process of State Examination and Theses Defense according to the procedures described above.
3. The Department is responsible for provision of the students with all the appropriate literature essential for preparation for the State Exam and Senior Theses writing and defense, such as APA Publication Manual. The literature is to be up-to-date and fully available.
4. The Department is responsible for development and offering the course of Senior Thesis Seminars to assist the students in research conducting and writing of their Theses. It is essential that the course syllabus is revised by faculty every year and serves as the full guide for major thesis requirements and Progress Reports deadlines for seniors.