

**American University of Beirut
Department of Psychology**

**Policies and Procedures for the MA Comprehensives and Thesis
Proposal and Defense**

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A. The Comprehensive Examination

Students must register for PSYC 395A Comprehensive Examination for the Spring term in order to sit for their exam at the end of the first year. Students must pass the comprehensive exam to be able to register for their thesis. As per the AUB catalogue, “A student who does not pass the comprehensive examination may take it a second time after a period of at least three months” (Graduate Catalogue, page 57). Students who do not get a grade of 75% on the comprehensive exam will be allowed ONE rewrite. The comprehensive exam consists of the following two parts:

1. Research Design and Statistical Analyses

The first part of the comprehensive exam will test the student on material learned in PSYC 301 and PSYC 302. It is a common part for all students.

2. The Specialization Part

The second part of the exam is the specialization part which will test students' understanding of the material learned in the content courses. For clinical students, you will be tested on clinical material, and for general students, you will be tested across the content courses you have taken in social, neuro and/or clinical courses.

B. Thesis Proposal

1. Composition of the Thesis Committee

The master's thesis committee should be composed of the student's thesis advisor and at least two committee members. The thesis advisor and at least one other committee members must be a full-time faculty member of the Department of Psychology. The selection of the primary thesis advisor is made by the MA candidate or together with the Graduate Program Coordinator as needed. Students are encouraged to identify their thesis advisor from the first semester of the program. The selection of the thesis topic is made initially by the MA candidate alone or in collaboration with the thesis advisor, and the student's research interest should fit the research interests of the selected thesis advisor. Members of the thesis committee for MA candidates should then be selected in consultation with the thesis advisor and approved at least four months before the actual graduation date. Committee members from outside the department or from outside the university must be full time faculty of professorial rank and will be required to submit their professional vitae before the committee is approved. Students are advised to seek committee members who will contribute to the development and depth of their research, regardless of the members' disciplinary specialization.

2. Role of Thesis Committee Members

Up until the proposal and during the proposal defense, the role of the committee members is primarily a consultative one. As such students may consult their committee members freely before the formal proposal evaluation. However, after the proposal defense, the students have prime responsibility for carrying out their studies, with their advisors as resource, and with minimal consultation with committee members. After completion of the study, the committee members will examine and evaluate the thesis.

During the proposal meeting and thesis defense the role of the committee members is as follows:

- a) Read the thesis completely.
- b) Mark typos and give the manuscript back to the student.
- c) Examine the student's understanding of the theoretical, conceptual, statistical, and empirical issues arising from the research and or related to the research.
- d) Make concrete recommendations to improve the proposal or final thesis.
- e) Identify which committee member will verify the recommendations made to the student.
- f) Decide whether the proposal or thesis will pass, fail, or pass with revisions (major or minor).

3. Scheduling of Thesis Proposal Presentation and Evaluation

Students will proceed to schedule their thesis proposal defense date with the committee members and are responsible for informing the Administrative Assistant regarding their readiness to defend their proposal for the purpose of reserving a room.

4 Distribution of the Thesis Proposal

The proposal is distributed to all committee members two weeks before the date set for the formal proposal presentation and evaluation. A copy may be made available in the department office for interested faculty.

5. Process of Thesis Proposal Defense

Typically the chair of the proposal and thesis committee will be the student's advisor, unless otherwise delegated. The role of the chair is as follows:

- a) Ensure the timely progression of the meeting, which may take approximately 90 minutes.

- b) Ensure that the student, and no one else, is answering the questions posed by the committee members.
- c) Allow committee members to examine the student's knowledge.
- d) The chair should not limit the committee member's ability to examine the student's knowledge in their area of research.
- e) It should be stressed that the chair's role is not to evaluate the student or the merits of the proposal.

Attendance by non-committee faculty members is completely volitional.

There should be a time frame for the proposal presentation and evaluation. The following is a suggested time line:

- 15-20 minutes for student presentation of proposal.
- After the presentation, there will be 20 minutes maximum for an open forum discussion where anyone is welcome to ask questions.
- After this time the Chair excuses non-committee members, unless the student and the chair have agreed to an open defense such that non committee members may remain present during the defense.
- The defense begins whereby committee members will ask their questions and make their comments.
- After the defense, the student, and non-committee members if any, is asked to leave the room and the committee discusses whether to approve the proposal, and what changes are needed. The student's advisor's role is to advocate for the student and to clarify issues that were not resolved in the forum.
- The student, and non-committee members if any, is invited back to the room and receives feedback by the advisor and committee members, is informed whether the proposal is accepted, and what changes need to be made before final acceptance. The recommendations of the committee is recorded by the advisor and made available to the student and the committee members after the proposal meeting.

6. Completion of Thesis Proposal Form

The student must fill out the Thesis Proposal Form of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences found on the FAS website. This form will automatically proceed to the thesis advisor and each member of the thesis committee for approval and signature. Once the thesis proposal has been approved, students may then register for thesis in the following term and proceed with their IRB application.

C. Thesis Defense

There must be a time period of four months between the thesis proposal defense and the thesis defense, as per university regulations.

1. Distribution and Scheduling of Final Thesis for Defense

Copies of the thesis unbound but ready for binding, should be submitted by the student to the members of the thesis committee at least two weeks before the thesis defense. Copies may be sent electronically instead to the committee members upon their request. Additional copies may be required, as specified by the department or program concerned.

2. Process of Thesis Defense

There should be a time frame for the presentation of the final thesis and its defense. The following is a suggested time-line:

- 20 minutes for student presentation of thesis.
- 20 minutes maximum for an open forum discussion (comments and questions from the audience).
- At the conclusion of the 20 minutes, non-committee members are excused, unless the student and the chair have agreed to an open defense.
- Questions and comments will come from the committee members during the defense.
- After the defense, the student, and non-committee members if any, is asked to leave the room and the committee discusses whether to pass or fail the thesis defense, and any applicable conditions for the former.
- The student, and non-committee members if any, is invited to come back to the room. The student is given feedback by the advisor and each committee member, and informed whether the thesis defense is a pass, with major or minor revisions, or fail, and the conditions for the former. If revisions are recommended the advisor records them and makes them available to the student and all committee members. One committee member is designated to ensure that all the recommended changes are made before the thesis is circulated for final signatures.

3. Results of Thesis Defense

"Pass" or "fail" is reported for the combined thesis and thesis defense. Students may "pass" with minor revisions or with major revisions. A student receives a "fail" if there are core problems in the data analysis or understanding of the results. If "fail" is reported, the student may resubmit the thesis and defend it after a period of at least three months. Failure on the second attempt results in discontinuation from graduate work. **Students must be registered for the thesis in the term in which they expect to graduate in order to present their defense.**

4. Formatting of Written Thesis

Formatting of thesis must accord with APA style. Preliminary pages, order of end pages, paper, ink, typefaces, margins, size and location of page numbers must conform and appear exactly as described in the latest version of the "APA Manual".

5. Completion of Thesis Defense of Graduate Students

The thesis defense completion form must also be filled online and can be found on the FAS website. The entire thesis must be submitted online as an attachment and the thesis advisor and committee members will proceed to approve and sign the form.

6. Thesis Deposit at the Library

As soon as approval for writing a thesis is granted, the student should get a copy of the Thesis Manual from the library which provides instructions on the preparation of theses. Its application is mandatory, and theses not conforming to its requirements will not be accepted.

After passing the final thesis defense examination, the student is required to deposit two copies of the MA thesis at the Jafet Memorial Library. A library receipt of these copies must be delivered to the Office of the Registrar before the student is awarded the degree. The student should sign a release form indicating whether or not the library is authorized to supply copies of the thesis to other libraries or to individuals. The non-authorization option is valid for a period of two years only, after which copies of the thesis will be supplied on request.

D. Thesis Deadlines

Students must abide by the deadlines set by the University if they wish to graduate in their target semester. These are university-wide deadlines for all graduate programs at AUB. Exact thesis deadlines are published and updated on the Graduate Council website.

For graduation in:	Summer	Fall	Spring
Deadline for approval of thesis topic and committee	First Monday of the Summer term	First Monday of the Fall term	Last Monday of the preceding Fall term
Deadline for thesis defense	Fourth Monday of the following Fall term	One week after the end of Fall term	One week before the end of Spring term
Deadline for deposit of thesis	Ten days after	Ten days after	Ten days after

at library	the deadline of the defense	the deadline of the defense	the deadline of the defense
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