



SACRAMENTO
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California State University, Sacramento
Graduate Handbook
Applied Behavior Analysis

2024-2025

THE ABA HANDBOOK COVERS THE FOLLOWING CONTENT:

- Department and Program Overview
- ABA Program
- Faculty
- Students
- Program Requirements
- Course Schedule
- Academic Development
- Professional Development
- Conference Etiquette
- SAABA
- Advancement to Candidacy
- Thesis and Graduation
- Academic Probation/Disqualification
- Policy Exceptions Procedure
- Student Grievance Procedures
- BCBA
- Time Management

DEPARTMENT AND PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Psychology Department

Located with its lush landscaping and 3,000 trees, the beautiful 300-acre California State University, Sacramento (CSUS; also known as Sacramento State) offers a vibrant intellectual environment with a multicultural student body of almost 30,000. Despite the large student body, quality teaching in small classes remains a top priority at Sacramento State. Students enjoy personalized attention from their professors with a student-faculty ratio of 21 to 1.

Sacramento State offers 60 undergraduate and 40 graduate programs. The Sacramento State Psychology Department offers an undergraduate program in General Psychology and a certificate program in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). The undergraduate course sequence in ABA prepares students to sit for the Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA) Exam and qualifies students for positions requiring the application of Behavior Analysis to children with developmental disabilities. At the graduate level, the Psychology Department offers Master of Science degrees in Psychological Research (with specific emphasis on Psychology Doctoral Preparation), and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), as well as a Master of Arts degree in Industrial/Organizational Psychology.

ABA PROGRAM

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is the field of psychology concerned with analyzing and modifying human behavior. More specifically, ABA is a scientific approach aimed at 1) understanding environmental variables that reliably influence socially significant behaviors and 2) developing behavior-change technologies based on this understanding.

ABA procedures have been widely used in many areas including developmental disabilities, education, rehabilitation, community psychology, clinical psychology, business and industry, self-management, child management, sports psychology, gerontology, etc. The program at Sacramento State prepares students to practice as Master's-level board certified behavior analysts (BCBAs) by providing coursework, which fulfills the requirements to sit for the national certification exam in behavior analysis. Our graduates are extremely marketable in California and are typically employed by school districts, private schools, hospitals or agencies providing services to individuals with learning, emotional and/or developmental disabilities. The Sacramento State ABA program also prepares students to enter doctoral (Ph.D.) programs in ABA or Experimental Analysis of Behavior.

Mission Statement:

The ABA program goals are to teach students to think critically and scientifically about behavioral processes; to enable students to enter doctoral programs in behavior analysis; and to prepare students for careers in ABA.

FACULTY

Denys Brand, Ph.D. (University of Auckland, New Zealand)

Associate Professor

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Research Interests: Procedural Fidelity, Performance Feedback, Preference Assessments in workplace, Rapport Building

Dr. Denys Brand was awarded his Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Auckland (New Zealand) in 2015. His doctoral dissertation (using sequential analysis to identify problematic sequential dependencies affecting the treatment integrity of discrete-trial teaching programs for children with disabilities) was supervised by Drs. Oliver Mudford and Douglas Elliffe.

Following his Ph.D., he worked three-years as a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Kansas under the supervision of Dr. Florence D. DiGennaro Reed. Dr. Brand has published in peer-reviewed academic journals, such as *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, *Behavioral Interventions*, *Journal of Behavioral Education*, *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *European Journal of Behavior Analysis*, and currently serves on the editorial board for the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior Management*, and the *European Journal of Behavior Analysis*. He has also previously served on the editorial board for *Behavior Analysis in Practice*. Currently he serves on the Teaching and Research Committee for the OBM Network and was a member of the Organizational Procedural Integrity (OPI) Taskforce.

Dr. Brand teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in applied behavior analysis, organizational behavior management, and the experimental analysis of behavior. His research laboratory (Performance Improvement Laboratory) conducts research within a translational framework to identify and investigate variables affecting performance in the workplace. Dr. Brand is passionate about the study of behavior in both experimental and applied settings and enjoys working alongside undergraduate and graduate students as a teacher and researcher.

Megan Heinicke, Ph.D., BCBA-D (Auburn University)

Associate Professor

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Research Interests: Acquired Brain Injury, Neurorehabilitation, Verbal Behavior, Public Speaking, Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, College Teaching Practices, Public Health

Dr. Megan Heinicke received her Ph.D. in Cognitive and Behavioral Sciences from Auburn University under the advisement of Dr. James Carr. Dr. Heinicke received her Bachelor's degree from Western Michigan University and her Master's degree from Auburn University.

Currently, Dr. Heinicke is an associate professor in the Psychology Department at California State University, Sacramento. Dr. Heinicke teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in applied behavior analysis and developmental disabilities. Dr. Heinicke is also a Board Certified Behavior Analyst-Doctoral with experience in various settings including neurorehabilitation settings, alternative schools, clinic settings, and foster care systems. She currently serves as the Behavior Analysis Supervisor for a local Family Home Agency that provides consultation services to adults with developmental disabilities who are placed in foster care. Dr. Heinicke's research has been published in the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, *Brain Injury*, *The Analysis of Verbal Behavior*, *Behavioral Interventions*, *The Behavior Analyst*, *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, *Behavior Analysis: Research and Practice*, and *Journal of Organizational Behavior Management*. She currently serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*.

Dr. Heinicke continues to be invited to national and international conferences to speak on the topic of neurorehabilitation. She is currently the only faculty member in the United States working in this specialty area in behavior analysis. Dr. Heinicke is the recipient of the 2017 CSUS Junior Faculty Research Award and the Outstanding Wisdom and Leadership Award as well as the 2020 CSUS Outstanding Teaching Award.

Ciobha McKeown, Ph.D., BCBA-D (University of Nebraska Medical Center)

Assistant Professor

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Research Interests: Behavior Analysis of Development, Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention, Prevention, Social Skills, Verbal Behavior

Dr. Ciobha McKeown earned a Master's degree in Applied Behavior Analysis from California State University, Northridge in 2016 wherein she completed her BCBA hours under the supervision of Dr. Tara Fahmie. In 2020, she earned a PhD in Applied Behavior Analysis at the University of Nebraska Medical Center under the advisement of Dr. Kevin Luczynski. During her doctoral training, she worked at the Munroe-Meyer Institute where she provided clinical supervision for in-clinic, telehealth, social skill group, and school-based behavior analytic services.

Prior to joining Sacramento State, Dr. McKeown served as a Postdoctoral Associate and then Research Assistant Professor at the University of Florida (UF) wherein she worked closely with Dr. Timothy Vollmer's lab. During her time at UF, DR. McKeown developed a short-term, intensive early intervention program at UF Health's Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment. DR. McKeown also served as an Adjunct Professor for Rollins College during this time.

Due to her long clinical history, Dr. McKeown's research is focused in improving the quality of care of neurodiverse children and extending behavior analytic methodology to infants. This includes investigating procedures that promote language development, establish and maintain prosocial behavior, and prevent the development of problem behavior. Her research has been published in the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, *Perspectives on Behavior Science*, and *Behavioral Interventions*.

Caio Miguel, Ph.D., BCBA-D (Western Michigan University)

Professor

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Research Interests: Applied Behavior Analysis, Verbal Behavior, Stimulus Control, Equivalence Relations, Autism Treatment, Applied Animal Behavior, Organizational Behavior Management

Dr. Miguel obtained his bachelor's degree in Psychology at the Pontificia Universidade Catolica de São Paulo in Brazil, and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) at Western Michigan University. While at Western Michigan, Dr. Miguel worked closely with both Dr. Jack Michael and Dr. James Carr. He has been a Board Certified Behavior Analyst-Doctoral (BCBA-D) since 2004. Dr. Miguel is currently a Professor of Psychology at Sac State and an Adjunct Doctoral Advisor for the Ph.D. Program in ABA at the Institute for Behavioral Studies at Endicott College. Dr. Miguel also serves as an Adjunct Professor at the Department of Experimental Psychology at the University of Sao Paulo - Brazil.

Dr. Miguel served as an Associate Editor (2015-2018) for the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis (JABA)* and as the Editor-in-Chief (2009-2011) and Associate Editor (2008; 2011-2015) for *The Analysis of Verbal Behavior*. He is currently an Associate Editor for the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*.

Dr. Miguel has given hundreds of professional presentations in North America, South America and Europe, has graduated over 40 M.A. and Ph.D. students, and has had over 100 manuscripts published in English, Portuguese, and Spanish. He is the recipient of the 2013-2014 award for outstanding scholarly work by the College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies at Sacramento State, the 2014 Outstanding Mentor Award by the Student Committee of the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI), the 2019 Excellence in Teaching Verbal Behavior Award by the VBSIG of ABAI, the 2019 Outstanding Alumni Award from the Psychology Department at Western Michigan University, and the Jack Michael Award for Outstanding Contributions to Verbal Behavior.

Clinically, Dr. Miguel served as a consultant for the St. Amant Centre's early intervention program in Winnipeg, MB, Canada, and as a program specialist for the New England Center for Children (NECC). While at NECC, Dr. Miguel was a Clinical Assistant Professor for the Master's program in Applied Behavior Analysis (MABA) at Northeastern University. He operates Verbale, LLC., an international behavioral consulting firm based in Sacramento, CA.

Becky Penrod, Ph.D., BCBA-D (University of Nevada, Reno)

Professor

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Research Interests: Applied Behavior Analysis, Autism Treatment, Childhood Feeding Disorders, Pediatric Behavior Problems, Application of ABA in Primary Care Settings, and Parent Training

Dr. Becky Penrod received her Ph.D. in Psychology – Applied Behavior Analysis from the University of Nevada, Reno under the advisement of Dr. Michele Wallace. Currently, Dr. Penrod is an Associate Professor of Psychology and the Director of the Autism Center for Excellence at Sacramento State University. She is also a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. She teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses in applied behavior analysis, special populations, assessment and treatment of problem behavior, research methods, and ethics.

Dr. Penrod is also part of a multidisciplinary feeding team in the Pediatric Specialties Clinic at Kaiser, Roseville where she treats children in the community with severe feeding disorders such as food selectivity and food refusal. Dr. Penrod has a well-developed research agenda and has published work in peer-reviewed journals including the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* and *Behavioral Interventions*. She has also co-authored two books on understanding disability and assessment and treatment of problem behavior in the classroom.

Prior to joining Sacramento State, Dr. Penrod served as a behavioral consultant in both home and school settings. She has over 12 years of clinical experience working with children and adults with autism spectrum disorders and related disabilities.

STUDENTS

Students in the ABA program should demonstrate a strong commitment to a behavioral orientation in psychology and should develop research and scholarly potential as scientists and practitioners. Our faculty value accomplishment in the admission selection process and are committed to providing continued support for our students. Students and professors work closely together, and it is thereby important to us that students complement the group, both intellectually and personally.

Students are expected to devote themselves to their studies full time, and manage their time effectively to fulfill other responsibilities, such as internship, instructional assistantship, participation in research, conference attendance, and involvement in the Student Association of Applied Behavior Analysis (SAABA).

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Coursework

Our coursework is designed to meet the requirements of the BACB, as well as the requirements for the Psychology Department. The current course catalog can be found at <https://catalog.csus.edu/colleges/social-sciences-interdisciplinary-studies/psychology/ms-in-applied-behavior-analysis/>. Below you will find the curriculum for the MS in ABA degree.

- PSYC 200 Methods in Empirical Psychology (3 units)
- PSYC 242 Seminar on Learning and Behavior (3 units)
- PSYC 271 Advanced Applied Behavior Analysis (4 units)
- PSYC 272 Research Methods in Behavior Analysis (3 units)
- PSYC 274 Theoretical Foundations of Behavior Analysis (3 units)
- PSYC 275 Applied Behavior Analysis in the Workplace (3 units)
- PSYC 281 Advanced Experimental Analysis of Behavior (4 units)
- PSYC 284 Assessment and Treatment of Behavior Problems (4 units)
- PSYC 291 Practicum in Applied Behavior Analysis (3 units)
- PSYC 294 Cooperative Research (1)
- PSYC 297A Advanced Research I (1)
- PSYC 291B Advanced Research II (2)
- PSYC 299 Special Problems (2)

Thesis (4-6 Units)

- PSYC 500A Culminating Experience (4 units)
- PSYC 500B Culminating Experience if needed (2 units). If the thesis is not completed by the end of the semester in which students are enrolled in PSYC 500A, students must enroll for 2 units of PSYC 500B during the following semester. If the thesis is still not completed by the end of that semester, students must enroll in the university designated thesis/project continuation course; this course is currently PSYC 599.

Coursework Sequence

Graduate courses are offered once every two years. It is important to plan your curriculum wisely to ensure you can graduate on a timely manner. Please refer to the tables below for coursework sequences.

Course Schedules for Active ABA Cohorts

Fall 2022 Cohort	
<u>Fall 2022 (7 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 200: Methods in Empirical Psychology* • PSYC 272: Research Methods in Behavior Analysis • PSYC 294: Cooperative Research (min 1 unit)** 	<u>Spring 2023 (7 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 274: Theoretical Foundations of Behavior Analysis • PSYC 291: Practicum in Applied Behavior Analysis • PSYC 297A: Advanced Research I (min 1 unit)**
<u>Fall 2023 (9 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 242: Seminar in Learning & Behavior • PSYC 271: Advanced Applied Behavior Analysis • PSYC 297B: Advanced Research II (min 2 units)** 	<u>Spring 2024 (8 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 281: Advanced Experimental Analysis of Behavior • PSYC 284: Assessment and Treatment of Behavior Problems
<u>Fall 2024 (9 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 275: ABA in the Workplace • PSYC 500A: Culminating Experience • PSYC 299: Special Problems (min 2 units)** 	<u>Spring 2025 (2 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 500B: Culminating Experience (if necessary)
<i>*Course overlaps with General and I/O; must be taken in that semester by the ABA 2022 cohort</i> <i>**Course is variable units and can be increased for financial aid purposes</i>	

Fall 2023 Cohort	
<u>Fall 2023 (8 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 242: Seminar in Learning & Behavior • PSYC 271: Advanced Applied Behavior Analysis • PSYC 294: Cooperative Research (min 1 unit)** 	<u>Spring 2024 (8 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 281: Advanced Experimental Analysis of Behavior • PSYC 284: Assessment and Treatment of Behavior Problems
<u>Fall 2024 (9 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 200: Methods in Empirical Psychology* • PSYC 272: Research Methods in Behavior Analysis • PSYC 275: ABA in the Workplace 	<u>Spring 2025 (7 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 274: Theoretical Foundations of Behavior Analysis • PSYC 291: Practicum in Applied Behavior Analysis • PSYC 297A: Advanced Research I (min 1 unit)**
<u>Fall 2025 (6 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 500A: Culminating Experience • PSYC 297B: Advanced Research II (min 2 units)** 	<u>Spring 2026 (4 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 500B: Culminating Experience (if necessary) • PSYC 299: Special Problems (min 2 units)**
<i>*Course overlaps with General and I/O; must be taken in that semester by the ABA 2023 cohort</i> <i>**Course is variable units and can be increased for financial aid purposes</i>	

Fall 2024 Cohort	
<u>Fall 2024 (7 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 200: Methods in Empirical Psychology* • PSYC 272: Research Methods in Behavior Analysis • PSYC 294: Cooperative Research (min 1 unit)** 	<u>Spring 2025 (7 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 274: Theoretical Foundations of Behavior Analysis • PSYC 291: Practicum in Applied Behavior Analysis • PSYC 297A: Advanced Research I (min 1 unit)**
<u>Fall 2025 (10 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 242: Seminar in Learning & Behavior • PSYC 271: Advanced Applied Behavior Analysis • Supervision (2) • PSYC 297B: Advanced Research II (min 2 units)** 	<u>Spring 2026 (9 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 281: Advanced Experimental Analysis of Behavior • PSYC 284: Assessment and Treatment of Behavior Problems • Supervision (2)
<u>Fall 2026 (9 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 275: ABA in the Workplace • PSYC 500A: Culminating Experience • PSYC 299: Special Problems (min 2 units)** 	<u>Spring 2027 (2 units)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSYC 500B: Culminating Experience (if necessary)
<i>*Course overlaps with General and I/O; must be taken in that semester by the ABA 2022 cohort</i> <i>**Course is variable units and can be increased for financial aid purposes</i>	

***Please note:** Fall 2024 Cohort Schedule is subject to change based on proposed curriculum changes that are currently being reviewed.

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

Students are required to maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher (on a 4-point system). The psychology department has a minimum requirement of “B” in all required courses. Grades lower than a “B” will not apply towards your degree. If it is a required course, the course will need to be repeated. Only one course may be repeated while in the program. Students who obtain a “B-” or lower for the second time in either the repeated course or another course will be disqualified from the program; however, students will be given the opportunity to appeal prior to disqualification. Appeals will be reviewed by the Graduate Coordinator, the student’s advisor, and the ABA Program Chair.

Academic Advising/ Mentorship

Students will be assigned to an advisor in their first semester based on faculty availability and mutual interests. Students are required to remain under the supervision of their assigned faculty advisor through the completion of the ABA program. Students are responsible for scheduling regular meetings with their advisor to obtain feedback on research progress as well as to ensure timely completion of program and thesis requirements.

Students may request to change their academic advisor at any time. Students who seek to change advisors should contact their original advisor to initiate the advisor change. The original advisor will then communicate with the preferred advisor to finish the change process.

Participation in Laboratory Meetings

Students are required to attend and participate in their advisor’s research laboratory meetings. Students are encouraged to attend and participate in other faculty’s research meetings; however, they need to obtain approval from their faculty advisor before attending.

Graduate Student Progress Report

The Psychology Department requires graduate students to file a Graduate Student Progress Report to the department every semester. Students are responsible for initiating a meeting with their advisor at the beginning of each semester to discuss the progress they made in the previous semesters. Students should bring to the meeting a copy of the Report form (available online on the Psychology Department Graduate Students Canvas page), their latest CV, the Internship Semester Evaluation Form, and any additional professional documents that will help advisor to assess your progress. The faculty advisor will complete the progress report after the meeting, taking into consideration the student’s input. Both the faculty advisor and the student will sign the form, which should be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator by October 15th (Fall semesters) or February 15th (Spring semesters). If the student disagrees with the faculty’s assessment of his/her progress, the student may write a rebuttal (which may include a clarification of extenuating circumstances, any relevant additional information, or an explanation for a difference of opinion between you and your faculty advisor) and attach it to the signed progress report. Please note that failure to submit the progress report on time can be considered as not making satisfactory progress.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Board Certification

The ABA track coursework fulfills the requirements to sit for the national certification exam in Behavior Analysis (Eligibility Pathway 2; see BACB website). Clinical experiences/internships must be completed within a 5-year period (i.e., the start-date and end-date may not be more than five years apart. For example, May 1, 2020, to April 30, 2025). Behavior-analytic coursework must be obtained within 10 years of the year the application was submitted (e.g., to apply in 2024, coursework must have been completed in 2014 or later). For more information, visit www.bacb.com.

Clinical Experiences/Internships

Students should gain their clinical experiences at verified internship sites. Although clinical supervision needs to be approved by your advisors, **students are responsible to ensure supervision hours are provided as stated in the BACB guidelines**. It is required that students accrue all required hours before graduation; however, students should not exceed 20-25 work hours per week. It should be noted that the BACB requires the start-date and end-dates of experience to be within a 5-year period (For more information, visit www.bacb.com). Please see the *CSUS ABA Internship Guidelines* for details on the internship program requirements.

Research Experiences

Students are required to assist with data collection for at least one assigned research study during the first year in the program. During the second year, students are expected to develop their own thesis. Students select their thesis topic in consultation with his/her advisor. Students must select a topic that falls under one of his advisor's lines of research and expertise.

Students should obtain permission from their advisor before agreeing to serve as a research assistant in any project being conducted in the program. Students are expected to spend a certain number of hours per week on research in accordance with the number of research units in which they are enrolled. This number should increase when working on the thesis project.

Teaching Experiences

Students may earn teaching experiences as Instructional Student Assistants (ISAs). These positions are limited each semester. Applicants who have prior teaching experiences are considered first. Teaching experience is highly valued by employers who expect behavior analysts to provide staff and parent trainings. Students interested in applying for Ph.D. programs should try to obtain as much teaching experience as they can.

Conference Attendance

Students are expected to attend conferences hosted by California Association for Behavior Analysis (CalABA), Nevada Association for Behavior Analysis (NABA), Association of Professional Behavior Analysts (APBA), Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI), and the ABA Conference of Northern California (CNC). Students should discuss which conference(s) they plan on attending with their advisor. Students are expected to present their research and scholarly work at these professional conferences and to take advantage of these opportunities to stay acquainted with the professional community.

CONFERENCE ETIQUETTE

1. Remember that you are representing our program when at the conference; be a good ambassador. Be sure to maintain a professional demeanor as a representative of the ABA program at Sacramento State, especially during social events. Keep in mind that your actions and those of your peers can affect how others perceive our program.
2. Attend the poster session to answer any questions about the program and our research.
3. Introduce yourself to people and ask them questions about their research. Use the opportunity to tell them what you are doing and ask for feedback.
4. Take full advantage of the professional development opportunities available to you by fully participating in the conference by attending all available talks, workshops, poster sessions, and social functions.
5. During sessions, engage in good audience behavior (e.g., facing toward presenter, sitting professionally) as well as active engagement (e.g., taking relevant notes, asking related questions, interacting with speakers afterward). Do not text or check Facebook during talks.
6. Dress professionally to represent your university and advisor well.
7. Many of your advisor's former students will be at the conference. They are a valuable resource for jobs in California; meet and chat with them.
8. The common areas in the conference hotel are a good place to network after the conference. Your future could change after a short conversation with someone important and well-connected.
9. Have fun.

***Please Note:** If you agree to present at a professional conference, you are expected to honor the commitment and attend.

STUDENT ASSOCIATION FOR APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS (SAABA)

Students are expected to participate in all events organized by SAABA including general meetings, guest speakers' events, and the ABA Conference of Northern California (CNC). The benefits of student members include easy and free access to up-to-date information about ABA and upcoming SAABA events, free or discounted entrance to SAABA events, free access to employment opportunities in the field of ABA, networking with successful professionals and organizations, assistance with curriculum vitae, access to SAABA office hours, discounts on all SAABA paraphernalia etc. SAABA currently offers several officer positions (President; Vice President; Media Specialist, Treasurer; Secretary), a non-officer Alumni Liaison position, and Undergraduate Liaison positions. These positions offer unique opportunities to interact with the ABA community within the surrounding Sacramento area.

ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY

Advancement to candidacy gives the student permission to proceed toward qualifying for the degree and provides the student with a program of study that has been officially reviewed and approved by both the student's faculty and by the Graduate Dean. This important step confers on the student the status of candidate for the degree. It represents a commitment both on the part of the student and the degree program to complete the degree within a specified time limit according to the requirements published in a specific university catalog year.

Advancement to candidacy must be attained no later than the semester before the semester in which the student applies for graduation. Compliance with this policy is necessary for a student to remain in good standing. All potential candidates must demonstrate a satisfactory level of scholastic, professional, and ethical competence as determined by program faculty to be eligible to continue in the graduate program.

Students who have completed the majority of their required coursework must advance to candidacy by filing an Advancement to Candidacy petition with the Graduate Center, in the semester prior to the time that they plan to enroll in PSYC 500A.

Requirements for Filing the Advancement to Candidacy Petition

1. Classified graduate standing
2. Completed at least 12 units of graduate courses with a minimum GPA of 3.0
 - Any course in which a student has earned "C+" or lower will not apply toward the degree.
3. Decided upon all of the courses to be applied toward the degree
4. Submitted a summary and a signed Approval of Thesis or Project Proposal form to the Psychology Department

Changes in Plans after Filing the Advancement to Candidacy Petition

Once the Advancement to Candidacy petition is accepted by the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS), any deviations from it in any way (e.g., not taking a course listed on the petition, changing thesis topic) must be formally requested by submitting a Petition for Exception to the OGS. This petition must be approved by both the department and the OGS. Failure to file this petition (if a difference exists between the student's record and the Advancement to Candidacy form) will cause the university to withhold granting the degree.

THESIS AND GRADUATION

Steps for Thesis Completion & Graduation:

1. Identify a Thesis Topic

Students should try to identify plausible topics for a thesis during their first year in the ABA program by participating and assisting with ongoing research studies, reading different research papers, and meeting with the faculty advisors regularly, both to discuss their own interests and to discover the advisor's interests and areas of expertise.

2. Prepare a Written Proposal. Thesis proposals for the ABA program should adhere to the following guidelines:

- The proposal should be written in APA format.
- The proposal should include a title page specifying the student's advisor and thesis committee.
- The introduction section of the proposal should include a literature review describing the relevant literature and the rationale for the study; this should not exceed 20 pages.
- The following section should describe the methods of the study. It is recommended that students use the methods section of an already published article in a top-tier behavioral journal as a template (e.g., *JABA*, *JEAB*, *TAVB*, etc.).
- Students should include figures at the end of the document depicting either pilot or hypothetical data. These data should be presented during the proposal meeting as an exercise in describing the data evaluation process given the student's chosen experimental design.
- If already created, assessment tools and datasheets should be included in the Appendices.

When a polished draft of the proposal is finished, the thesis chair (your faculty advisor) will review it and suggest any revisions that may be needed. Most proposals will probably require several revisions before they are ready to be presented at the proposal meeting.

3. Form a Thesis Committee*

Students must form a thesis committee. The process should start when preparing the written proposal. A thesis committee must have at least three members with Ph.D.'s, including the chair. It is required that two committee members must hold a BCBA-D certification, and two members must be full-time tenure-track faculty in the Psychology Department at Sacramento State. One member may be from outside the University; however, students will need to obtain approval from the Graduate Coordinator. Upon approval, the Graduate Coordinator will send an approval letter along with CV from the outside committee member to the Graduate Studies. Once a committee is formed, students are expected to maintain regular communication with the members of the committee. The responsibility for the contact lies directly with the students.

***Please consult with your advisor regarding your thesis committee members**

4. Proposal Meeting & Approval

The written proposal should be sent to the committee members at least two weeks before the meeting. At this meeting, students will summarize the thesis proposal with a PowerPoint presentation, and the committee members will review its strength and weaknesses and may make suggestions. If the committee decides that substantial changes should be made in the proposal, the students must make those changes, resubmit the proposal to the committee, and schedule another meeting.

Students should have the Approval of Thesis Proposal form ready at the meeting. The form can be obtained at <http://www.csus.edu/psyc/graduate/current-students.html>. When the proposal is accepted by the committee, the committee will sign the form, which will then be submitted to the Psychology Department office.

5. Advancement to Candidacy & Enrollment in 500-series Coursework

After obtaining signature on the Approval of Thesis Proposal form, students should submit the form as well as the Advancement to Candidacy petition to the Psychology office before the Department deadline. In the semester after being advanced to candidacy, students should enroll for 4 units of PSYC 500A Culminating Experience. If necessary, students may need to enroll in PSYC 500B and later in PSYC 599 in the subsequent semesters if the thesis is not completed.

6. IRB Approval & Data Collection

All theses involve working with and collecting data from humans or animals. All such research must be approved by the university's Institutional Research Board (IRB). Data collection (even pilot studies), data processing, or any form of contact with living creatures must not take place until the research has been approved in writing by the appropriate committee. Collecting or processing data or engaging with participants or potential participants without obtaining the necessary approvals is an ethical violation and constitutes a sufficient reason for students to be dismissed from our program. As soon as a student completes a final revision of their proposal, but before they present it to their committee, they should begin work on their IRB application (see the [IRB website](#) for more information). Once the student's proposal has been approved by their committee, any modifications to the IRB application should be made. The completed and updated application should be resubmitted as soon as possible. Please be aware that the IRB may have questions or request modifications to the methods section based on their review.

7. Apply for Graduation

Students should apply for graduation during the semester they plan to graduate. Please pay the \$70.00 fee at the Student Financial Services Center (Lassen Hall) before submitting the form to the Office of Graduate Studies (River Front Center, Room 215). The deadlines for Fall semester and Spring/Summer semester are October 1st and February 1st, respectively.

Students must submit Master's/Doctoral Graduation Date Change Form if they need to change their graduation date after initial submission for graduation. Additional fees may need to be paid if graduation is delayed. Please check with the Student Financial Services Center.

8. Data Analysis

Students should closely work with their committee chair (faculty advisor) in planning this step and to keep their chair regularly updated on the thesis progress so that each stage of this process is discussed. During a student's data collection process it is expected for data to be graphed and presented during lab meetings regularly. The student's advisor will notify the student when they will be expected to present.

Once the data are analyzed, students should discuss the results of the analyses with the chair to ensure that the analyses were performed correctly and to verify the students' interpretation of those results. Students may also want to discuss the results with other committee members before writing the Master's Thesis defense document.

9. Prepare a Written Thesis. **Final Thesis** manuscripts should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Students may use APA or Graduate School formatting guidelines. The ABA program prefers those manuscripts be submitted to the thesis committee in APA formatting and later reformatted for the graduate school according to the graduate school guidelines. Information regarding graduate school guidelines can be found at <http://www.csus.edu/psyc/graduate/thesisprojectstyle.html>.
- The first section (Chapter 1) of the thesis should include the "Literature Review" (same used during proposal) and be titled as such (20 pages max).
- Chapter 2 should be titled "Introduction" and contain a shortened version of the literature review (6-8 pages). This should mirror the introduction of a published paper.
- The subsequent chapters (3 through 5) should be titled "Method," "Results," and "Discussion," respectively.
- If the thesis contains more than one experiment, each experiment should include a "Method" section and a combined "Results and Discussion" section, in addition to a section called "General Discussion." Students are encouraged to use multi-experiment papers published in top-tier behavioral journals as templates.
- Students should include datasheets or any information that may aid in the replication of the study in the Appendix.
- Manuscripts containing only one experiment should not exceed 30 pages. Manuscripts containing more than one experiment should not exceed 50 pages. These page limitations exclude the Literature Review, References, Tables, Figures, and Appendices.

The writing of the thesis starts with preliminary drafts of the material, editing by the Chair, rewriting by the student, and so on, until the Chair believes that the document is sufficiently polished to be read by other committee members.

In addition, students are required to attend a Thesis/Project Formatting Workshop designed by the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS). Information about Thesis/Project Workshops can be obtained by visiting the [OGS website](#). It is recommended that students contact previous students who have already completed this process so that they can avoid common formatting errors that may delay the acceptance of the thesis document.

10. Oral Defense

When the Chair decides that the written thesis is ready to be viewed by other committee members, students will schedule an oral defense. The written thesis should be submitted to the committee members at least two weeks prior to the defense date.

The chair of the committee conducts the oral defense meeting. Anyone may attend the meeting. An oral defense usually takes about one hour and proceeds according to the following sequence:

- a) Candidate orally presents a brief summary (~25 min) of the work using PowerPoint
- b) Committee may ask questions and give suggestions to the candidate
- c) Audience members are invited to question or interact with the candidate
- d) Candidates and observers are asked to leave the room
- e) Committee deliberation
- f) Only the candidate comes back to the room
- g) Candidate is informed of the outcome of the defense

Students should have two copies of the Signature & the Approval pages (printed on university-specified paper) ready for signatures from the committee members.

11. Format review by Graduate Coordinator

When the Chair decides that the written thesis is ready to be viewed by other committee members, students can send the electronic version of the thesis to Graduate Coordinator for the first read before the oral defense. Please check the deadline for the first read as it varies each semester.

Students will make changes regarding the format of the thesis until the Graduate Coordinator decides that the thesis is ready (informed via email), students will bring a copy of the committee signature page, a hard copy of the thesis (on regular paper), as well as two copies of signature pages (on university-specified paper) for the Graduate Coordinator's signature. This step must be done after the oral defense as signatures from all committee members are needed.

12. Format review by Office of Graduate Studies (OGS)

Once signed by the Graduate Coordinator, the manuscript (printed on regular paper) must be taken to the thesis formatting workshop. It will again be examined to be sure that it meets university standards in every respect before it is accepted for binding and shelving in the Library. Students often make several visits to the formatting workshop before the document is accepted. It is recommended that students review the cut-off date of the format review and schedule an appointment with the OGS as soon as possible. These appointments fill up quickly and the department is strict with their hours of operation.

When the manuscript is ready to be accepted by the Graduate Center, students must take the followings:

- a) One unbound thesis on university specified paper with all signatures pages
- b) One electronic copy (saved on a flash drive)
- c) One extra copy for all signature pages
- d) One paid Microfilming & Binding Receipt
- e) Three copies of Thesis/Project/Dissertation Receipt Form
- f) One signed Thesis/Project/Dissertation workshop certificate

g) Clear all holds from your student record.

13. Commencement

For commencement requirements, go to <http://www.csus.edu/commence>.

ACADEMIC PROBATION / DISQUALIFICATION

Graduate students in the ABA program may be placed on Academic Probation for the following reasons:

1. Unsatisfactory academic progress toward a Master's degree (e.g., failing classes, carrying less than a full load of credits (6-9 units), inadequate progress toward completion of degree or thesis, poor lab attendance, etc.)
2. Failure to maintain the minimum GPA (See **Academic Standing** above)
3. Ethical violations (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, falsification of data, inappropriate relations with subordinates, inappropriate behavior with respect to clients, misrepresentation of credentials)
4. Withdrawal from a substantial portion of the program without advisor approval
5. Program policy violations (e.g., private consultation in local region, accepting unauthorized employment)
6. Behavior unbecoming of a graduate student (e.g., excessive drinking or other substance abuse in a professional circumstance)
7. Other such circumstances

Academic Probation may result in reassignment of advisor, dismissal from the program, or other such actions as deemed reasonable and appropriate given the offense.

ABA POLICY EXCEPTIONS PROCEDURES

To provide a clear and consistent process for considering exceptions to established ABA graduate program policies due to unique or extenuating circumstances. This exceptions procedure will be reviewed annually along with other program policies to ensure ongoing fairness and effectiveness.

Procedure

Students seeking a policy exception (e.g., waiving of a program requirement, switching internship sites) must submit a written request to the ABA Program Coordinator. The request must clearly specify the policy from which the exception is sought, the rationale for the request, and supporting documentation of extenuating circumstances. The ABA Program Coordinator will review the request and consult with appropriate faculty or administration as needed. A decision regarding the exception request will be communicated to the student in writing within 10 business days.

Appeal

If the student disagrees with the decision, an appeal may be made in writing to the Department Chair within 10 business days of the initial decision. The Department Chair's decision will be final and communicated within 10 business days of receiving the appeal.

Documentation

All requests for policy exceptions, decisions, and appeals will be documented and maintained confidentially by the ABA program coordinator for at least five years.

STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

This policy provides a clear, structured process for graduate students enrolled in the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) program to raise concerns, grievances, or disputes. A student grievance exists where a student claims that a violation, misapplication, or misinterpretation of a University policy, procedure, or practice has occurred.

This policy was developed in compliance with the Sacramento State's Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy, Faculty Responsibility to Students in the Instructional Environment Policy, and the Complaint Procedures for Students Policy.

For cases involving **discrimination**, refer to the policy on The California State University's System Wide Procedure for Handling Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation Complaints by Students and Applicants for Admission against the CSU and/or CSU Employees - Executive Order No. 1045 www.calstate.edu/eo/EO-1045.html Contact the Office of Equal Opportunity. <https://www.csus.edu/diversity-inclusion/division-inclusive-excellence/office-equal-opportunity/>

Grade appeals should be handled through the University Grade Appeal Policy. <https://www.csus.edu/academic-affairs/grade-appeals/>

For matters of **physical danger** or immediate **safety concerns**, students are advised to go directly to campus police (Emergencies: 911; Dispatch: (916) 278-6000; Email: police@csus.edu).

Other grievances should follow the following steps:

1. Should a condition exist that a student believes is in violation of the rules, procedures, policies, or the standards of the university, it is important that they bring it to the attention of the appropriate individual or office. An attempt at an **informal resolution** should be the first action taken by the aggrieved party.
2. If an informal resolution is not possible, then the aggrieved party should **meet with the Program Coordinator(s)**.
 - a. The student should submit a statement of their grievance and send any associated documentation relevant to the issue to the Coordinator(s) at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.
 - b. If the Coordinator(s) and student resolve the issue, the grievance documentation and agreed upon resolution will be formally documented by the Coordinator(s).
 - c. If the Coordinator(s) find that the issue is in fact a specified academic right and that the student has asserted a reasonable claim of a violation of these rights, the coordinator(s) will refer the action to higher authority for action (i.e., **Graduate Coordinator**).
3. If the grievance is elevated to the **Graduate Coordinator**, the Graduate Coordinator will attempt to resolve the issue directly with the student and Program Coordinator(s). Upon the judgement of the Graduate Coordinator, the grievance may be elevated to the Psychology Graduate Committee, which includes a representative for each Graduate program (i.e., 1 faculty from Psychological Research, 1 faculty from Industrial-

Organizational Psychology, 1 faculty from Applied Behavior Analysis, and the Department Chair, wherein a resolution will be reached.

- a. The resolution will be sent to the Program Coordinator(s) for formal documentation.
4. If the student disagrees with resolution, the student has the right to submit an appeal to the Psychology **Department** Chair, which may be elevated to the **Dean of the College** of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies. Appeals must be submitted within 30 days after the resolution is reached.

BCBA EXAM

The BACB has approved the graduate course sequence from California State University, Sacramento as meeting the coursework requirement for taking the BCBA examination. Thus, the ABA program course sequence at CSUS meets the BACB coursework eligibility requirements. Applicants who provide verification that they have completed this approved course sequence will not have to provide coursework documentation.

The BCBA course sequence approval number for California State University Sacramento is 4172.

Note that exam applicants will have to meet additional requirements to qualify, including the required supervision hours. Please refer to the ABA program Internship Manual for additional information on how to obtain all supervision hours prior to completing the MS degree. Students are expected to have completed all of the BCBA experience hours prior to graduating from the program.

The program's reputation depends on maintaining a high passing rate. We encourage graduates to spend at three to six months post-graduation preparing for the BCBA exam. The best way to prepare for this exam is by using the computer based applications learning modules (<http://www.behaviordevelopmentsolutions.com>), while reviewing course material (e.g., the Cooper, Heron, and Heward [2020] textbook).

TIME MANAGEMENT

By Kathryn Lee-Carothers, M.A., BCBA
(Former Graduate Student)

Congratulations on your acceptance to graduate school! As you may know via friends, the media, and future advisors, graduate school will be a busy time in your life. Perhaps one of the most daunting and under-considered areas of graduate school is time management. Sure, writing papers and reading journal articles will take a lot of time, but what about attending guest lectures, signing up for internships, conducting research projects and volunteering to work beside your advisor as a teaching assistant? Whether the motivation for graduate school is the pursuit of higher education and movement into a doctorate program, or becoming an expert clinician, these “additional” tasks should not be considered “in-addition-to’s”, but rather, “must-dos”! The following are some tips to successfully manage your time while in the Graduate ABA Program at Sacramento State.

Overall recommendations for task allocation: Note that these are suggested hours only. Conversations with your graduate advisor can help make large scheduling commitments and decisions.

- 1) Attending classes: 6-9 hours per week
- 2) Conducting Research and Attending Lab Meetings: 10-30 hours per week
- 3) Studying, writing papers, and attending study groups assignments: 10-20 hours per week
- 4) Attendance at conferences, guest lectures, social events:
 - a. Three Conferences a year (i.e., NABA, CalABA, ABAI)
 - b. Guest Lecturers: 1-2 times per semester
 - c. Social Events: 1-2 times per month
- 5) Working/Internships: 10-20 hours per week

Set goals and analyze deficits in time management: While everyone may struggle with individual and unique time-management difficulties, here are some possible goals for the successful time management of a graduate student.

- 1) Plan time in advance by using a planner and daily to-do lists
- 2) Identify time of ultimate value and avoid scheduling non-preferred activities within this time frame. *Ultimate value activities may include dates with spouse, family vacations, weekend trips, etc.*
- 3) Use weekdays/nights to complete homework and research projects
- 4) Begin projects immediately after they are assigned
- 5) Schedule time for homework (including reading assignments) and projects

Use a Planner, and take it everywhere. Using a planner may seem like an obvious time management solution, however ensuring that the planner is easy to take with you is crucial to the success of **using that planner**. Today, there are several smart-phone apps that help record events and tasks, set reminders, and may even function as a to-do list. If you are planning to use a paper and pencil planner, be sure that it fits comfortably in your purse, backpack or messenger bag, or is easy to carry at places such as conferences or guest lectures. Record big events in the planner such as class times, work schedules, research, teaching assistant duties,

and special events. Avoid cramming to-do lists into the planner unless it has a special section to do so.

Create and Update To-Do Lists. Create specific to-do lists for each day with realistic items. The to-do list should be where you record things such as “Read pages 101-156”, or “write two pages of 271 literature review”. This differs from the planner above, where blocks of time may be indicated by simply writing “homework 2pm-5pm”. As you complete each item, cross it off the list and move onto the next item. Also, if you forget to create a to-do list until later in the day, don’t be afraid to add completed items and cross them off as a visual reminder of how much work you have done that day!

Conduct preference assessments to identify possible items or activities to contract as rewards. Conducting preference assessments frequently can help determine effective items or activities to contract as rewards for the completion of items on your to-do lists. Some strategies for assessing preference are:

- 1) Make a note of what activities are currently (or previously) competing with academic progress. Some examples are:
 - a. Online shopping
 - b. Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
 - c. Reading news articles
 - d. Watching television or movies
 - e. Shopping
 - f. Texting or making phone calls
 - g. Cleaning or organizing
- 2) Note any highly preferred items or activities that would be reasonable to “earn” for successful goal completion.
 - a. Browse stores online or in person
 - b. Check favorite band’s website for concert schedules and ticket information
 - c. Keep up with community calendars and fliers for fun social events
- 3) Some things to avoid when selecting possible items or activities to use in your behavior contract:
 - a. Selecting activities that do not occur often and are highly preferred, such as a relative visiting town. *Why not?* These activities are difficult to withhold if you do not meet the criterion for reinforcement and may lead to breaking the behavior contract.
 - b. Selecting items or activities that cannot be withheld, such as using the restroom or eating dinner. *Why not?* Similar to the reason above, that these activities are difficult to withhold and may lead to medical problems if successfully withheld for too long.
 - c. Selecting items that you do not currently have the resources to purchase, such as expensive concert tickets or a designer handbag. *Why not?* It may be difficult to contact these items once the criterion was met if you cannot afford them.
 - d. Selecting activities that will disrupt academic progress if not earned, such as attending student association meetings or conferences. *Why not?* This may

- be counterproductive to overall graduate school goals.
- e. Selecting low probability behaviors, such as laundry or dishes. *Why not?*
These activities may not function as reinforcement.

Setting up behavior contracts. After you have created a well-planned schedule, identified target skills and goals, as well as determined items or activities to use as reinforcement, begin to slowly introduce behavior contracts into your life. Start small, and gradually increase the criterion each time you are successful. Here are a few tips for successful implementation of behavior contracts:

- 1) Efficient time management relies on multiple schedules of reinforcement for completion of tasks
- 2) Schedules should be easy to remember! Start simple. Commit to one small change first.
- 3) Making visual reminders and data collection can be fun, but may add extra work
- 4) Begin by using high quality rewards or longer durations of high-preferred activities for minimum effort to ensure initial contact with success. Fade the schedule as quickly as possible.
- 5) If you break the contract, start over and decrease the criterion. Also, assess the environment and ensure you are set up for success.
- 6) Invest in the effort by purchasing items that may help facilitate behavior contracts. For example, if you watch a lot of cable television, you may want to purchase a DVR to record your favorite shows so that you can watch them once you have met criterion.