

# CLU MS Clinical Psychology Thesis Handbook

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2020-05-11

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# Chapter 1

## Goal of the Handbook

The goal of this handbook is to provide students with the information needed to successfully complete the master's thesis in the MS in Clinical Psychology Program (MSCP) at California Lutheran University (CLU). The manual should be understood as a supplement to the broader policies and procedures defined by the program and university.

### 1.1 Comprehensive Exam or Thesis?

By default, students entering the MSCP program are required to complete the comprehensive exam. Students can, however, choose to *opt out* of the comprehensive exam and instead complete a thesis project.

#### **What is the comprehensive exam?**

- A closed book essay test that covers all the material studied during the course of the MSCP program.
- The test is offered at the end of the spring semester during the second year.
- The exam consists of a morning session (9AM-Noon) and an afternoon session (1PM-4PM).
- During each session, students choose to respond to 3 of 5 questions.
- Instead of credits, students pay a comprehensive exam fee during the semester they take the exam.
- Students *do not* have to take PSYC 565, Research Practicum, in the fall and can instead choose an additional elective during their second year in the program.
- Students do not take PSYC 566, Thesis, in the spring of their second year.

### **Thesis Project**

- Students complete all the requirements outline in this manual
- Students enroll in PSYC 565, Research Seminar, during the fall of their second year
- Students enroll in PSYC 566, Thesis, during the spring of their second year

### **Pros and Cons**

#### *Thesis “Pros”*

- Students gain a high degree of expertise and mastery in the particular area under study.
- The thesis timeline creates accountability and structure in developing students’ research project.
- Doctoral programs might look favorably towards a completed thesis that demonstrates students ability to complete an independent research project.
- Doctoral programs that require a thesis might waive the thesis requirement based on students’ completed thesis at CLU.
- Students can have the thesis bound into a book.

#### *Thesis “Cons”*

- Despite the structure offered through coursework, the thesis requires a considerable amount of work and self-discipline and the stress associate with this extra work.
- Students take an extra 3-units (PSYC 566) in the spring of their second year for a total of 40-units versus 37-units for the comprehensive exam option.

#### *Comps “Pros”*

- A review sheet is provided to help focus student’s efforts to study.
- The exam is done in a day.
- Questions that are not adequately answered can be remitted before “failing.”
- The pressure to meet thesis requirements, every semester, is removed.
- Students can still complete an **independent research project (see below)** which would include the first three *thesis pros*
- Students choose a 3-credit elective during their second year
- The entire program is 37-units versus 40-units with the thesis option

#### *Comps “Cons”*

- A 6-hour, closed book, essay test can be stressful and exhausting
- The independent research project could not be as structured as the thesis option.

### **Independent Research Project + Comprehensive Exam**

Students can complete their own independent research project, identical to the thesis, but without the coursework (PSYC 565 & PSCY 566). There are three scenarios where this can occur:

1. A student can decide, from the beginning of the program, that they want to avoid the pressure and extra work of the thesis requirements but use the program to work on an independent research project. They could take PSYC 565 in the fall of their second year but will not take PSYC 566 during the spring.
2. Students might attempt the thesis but, for a variety of reasons, fall behind and be removed from or quite the thesis track.

In both of these scenarios, students are required to take the comprehensive exam and pay the comprehensive exam fee, in order to graduate. The student can, however, continue to work on their independent research project but not for credit.

## Chapter 2

# Thesis Checklist

Students who wish to pursue the thesis option are required to meet with Dr. Bedics at the end of every semester in order to review their progress according to the following timeline. Students who miss any of the following steps are removed from the thesis option and will be required to complete the comprehensive exam.

	Task	Date Due	Year	Finished
1.	Thesis Topic Approved	October 1st	First Year	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Literature Review Draft Psych 564	December 15th	First Year	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Academic Good Standing	December 15th	First Year	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Method Section	May 1st	First Year	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Literature Review Revision	May 1st	First Year	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Academic Good Standing	May 15th	First Year	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	Committee Assignment	June 30th	Summer	<input type="checkbox"/> Chair <input type="checkbox"/> Reader
8.	Academic Good Standing	July 3rd	Summer	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Enroll in PSYC 565	August 1st	Second Year	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	Committee Approval of Proposal	October 1st	Second Year	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.	IRB Submitted	November 1st	Second Year	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.	Academic Good Standing	December 15th	Second Year	<input type="checkbox"/>
13.	Enroll in PSYC 566	December 15th	Second Year	<input type="checkbox"/>
14.	Complete Draft to Dr. Bedics	May 1st	Second Year	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.	Committee Approval of Final	May 10th	Second Year	<input type="checkbox"/> Chair <input type="checkbox"/> Reader
16.	OSF Approval	May 1st	Second Year	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.	Thesis Commons	May 15th	Second Year	<input type="checkbox"/>
18.	Thesis Binding	Optional	Second Year	<input type="checkbox"/>
19.	GitHub Blog	Optional	Second Year	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.	Shiny App	Optional	Second Year	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 2.1 Thesis Topic - “Defining the Problem Area”

The general thesis topic is required to be selected during the beginning of the first semester of the first year. The thesis topic, does not, however, determine the hypotheses, methodology or general approach taken by the student to understand the problem (e.g. experimental, quasi-experimental, meta-analytic methods). It would be premature for a student to define a hypothesis in the first year when their understanding of the topic area is just beginning.

**Due:** October 1st, First Year

## 2.2 Literature Review - “Understanding the Problem”

The development of the literature review begins during the fall of the first during PSYC 564 Advanced Research Methods. The literature review will become the “introduction” section of the final thesis project and demonstrates the student’s mastery of the literature surrounding the *problem* to be addressed by the thesis. The typical length of a *complete* literature review is between 20-40 pages long but there is no maximum length. Initial drafts, such as that from PSYC 564, will be 10-12 pages in length. The development of the literature review is ongoing throughout the two years of the program until its completion on May 1st of the second year.

**Due:** December 15th, First year (First Major Draft); May 15th, end of first year (Second Major Draft); May 1st, end of second year (Final Draft)

## 2.3 Method Section - “Solving the Problem”

The method sections defines the procedures of the thesis project. The method section consists of the participant selection, selection of methods of measurements or materials, and the procedure. The method section can be worked on in PSYC 552 Psychometrics during spring of the first

**Due:** May 1st, First Year (First Draft)

## 2.4 Committee Assignment

Committee members are faculty or experts in the field that support the students work on the thesis. Students work with the program director to find the most appropriate committee members to support their research project.

- Students select 2 committee members including a chair and a reader
- One committee member must be affiliated with CLU; the second committee member can be from CLU or another institution
- Committee members typically hold doctoral degrees in areas that support the students research
- Students typically select a committee member who has domain expertise (often the chair) and one that has methodology expertise (reader).
- All committee members are approved by Dr. Bedics.

**Due:** June 30th, Summer after First Year

## 2.5 Committee Approval of Proposal

During the summer following the first year, committee members read the literature review and method section and provide a general statement of approval to Dr. Bedics. Based upon this approval, students are allowed to progress to the *thesis track*. The rest of the thesis process is guided through coursework including PSYC 565 Research Practicum in the fall of the second year and PSYC 566 Thesis in the spring of the second year.

**Due:** October 1st, Second Year

## 2.6 Academic Good Standing

Academic good standing refers to maintaining a GPA above a 3.0 throughout the entire program and acting consistently with all policies and procedures defined by the program (see Program Handbook) and university (see university policy and procedures). Any student who receives below a B- in any course is not allowed to complete the thesis for course credit and partial fulfillment of the degree.



## Chapter 3

# Coursework Relevant to the Thesis

Technically, the knowledge students gain from each course can be used to improve the development of the thesis. For example, if you have a particular interest in a specific disorder then it makes sense that you study that disorder in *PSYC 510 Psychopathology*.

There are, however, specific courses where the thesis is explicitly incorporated into assignments. Here are MSCP courses and how they are used to support the thesis:

PSYC#	Course	Semester	Year	Task
564	Adv. Research Methods	Fall	One	Literature Review
552	Psychometrics	Spring	One	Method
521	Ethics	Summer	One	Pre-Registration
565	Research Practicum	Fall	Two	IRB
566	Thesis	Spring	Two	Complete Draft due May 1st

## Chapter 4

# Formatting

The thesis paper is completed in a manner consistent with the Publication Manual of the APA (7th Edition). Specifically, the following sections should follow, exactly, the guidelines defined by the 7th Edition:

- Abstract
- Introduction
- Method
- Results
- Discussion
- References
- Tables
- Figures
- Appendices

There are several sections that **do not** follow the 7th Edition of the Publication Manual:

- Title Page
- Table of Contents

For examples of these, please see the Thesis Materials section of the MSCP homepage in Blackboard.

## Chapter 5

# Open Science Framework

OSF is repository that allows you to transparently share your work with the larger scientific community. During the course of the program, you will be using the OSF to organize your thesis and other independent research projects.

## Chapter 6

# Thesis Binding

The following are instructions for binding your thesis. The binding of your thesis is *optional* and at your expense. You are responsible for the spelling, grammar, and correct APA formatting of your thesis. A bound thesis is a **final** thesis.

1. At least three (3) bound copies of the Thesis must be ordered.
  - a. One copy for the Graduate School of Psychology, one copy for the Thesis Committee Chair, and one personal copy for your possession. You can order more if you prefer (see #2).
  - b. The three copies must be printed on 25% rag or cotton fiber water-marked white paper, at least 20 pound weight, 8½ x 11 inches in size (EZERASE, or similar paper is not acceptable). A good example is Southworth Fine Business Paper, 25% cotton, 24 pound, white, stock #403C which is available for purchase from Office Depot, OfficeMax, and Staples. A similar 20 pound weight paper is also available.
  - c. Original signed signature pages on the same paper must be submitted with each of the three copies.
2. Additional personal copies may be ordered at the same time.
  - a. Personal copies may be printed on paper of the student's choice (e.g., 20 pound paper).
  - b. Signature pages for the personal copies may be photocopies of the originals as long as they are on paper that is identical to the rest of the thesis.
3. Copies for binding must be delivered to the Program Specialist.
  - a. The copies delivered to the Program Specialist are NOT to be bound - just packaged with bright colored paper separating the individual copies.

- b. Students are responsible for paying binding fees for all copies (the three required copies and for any additional personal copies). The cost is \$40 per copy (no matter the length), and to be paid by check to CLU. Prices may change.
  - c. The Program Specialist will forward the copies to the bindery as they are delivered.
  - d. Once the Program Specialist receives the copies and payment for binding, a change of grade will be submitted to the Registrar's Office.
- 4. The bound copies are typically ready in about 6-8 weeks and are distributed as follows:
  - a. The Graduate School of Psychology copy and the Thesis Committee Chair copy will be delivered via campus mail by the Program Specialist.
  - b. Students will be notified when their personal copies are ready for pick-up.
- 5. If you have any questions regarding the binding process, please do not hesitate to contact Mengmeng Liu, Graduate Program Specialist, at 805-493-3662 or at [mengmengliu@callutheran.edu](mailto:mengmengliu@callutheran.edu).

## Chapter 7

# Thesis Commons

Thesis Commons is a place for you publish your thesis to be seen by others. Thesis Commons is supported by OSF and is a way to both archive and showcase your work along with your OSF project.

## Chapter 8

# Presentations and Publications

The faculty hope you present your work at conferences and in publications. Please remember to contact your chair *prior* to submitting your work to any professional outlet. Your committee will typically be authors on all of your publically published work.