

## Second-Year Research Project or Master's Thesis

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Students in the second year of the Master's program complete and defend a Master's thesis. Students who enter the PhD program directly with a baccalaureate degree complete a comparable Second-Year Research Project (SYRP) in their second year. This document is intended to provide some general guidelines and procedures for this project.

- The project is normally completed during the second year in the program.
- In developing and carrying out this project, the student normally takes greater responsibility and independence, as compared to the First-Year Research Project (FYRP).
- The FYRP and the SYRP (or Master's thesis), as well as the PhD dissertation research project, should constitute independent projects in the sense that each, in principle, could form the basis of a distinct publication. However, it is recognized that students often conduct programmatic research in which one study builds on another, and distinct publications in the same research program might involve similar methodologies and might address similar or related research questions. In that context, it might well be appropriate for a student to report his or her previous research when writing a SYRP report, Master's thesis, or PhD dissertation, perhaps in some detail. It is the responsibility of the student's supervisory committee to interpret and apply this guideline.
- The plan (i.e., proposal) for the research should be approved *in advance* by the student's supervisory committee. A supervisory committee meeting early in the second year would be a suitable forum for such approval.
- Following completion of the research project, the student is to submit a written report, usually in the form of an article for a scholarly journal, to his or her supervisory committee. For students in the Master's program, this report constitutes the Master's thesis. This committee evaluates the report and may, at its option, require changes. This process is intended to be iterative and cooperative, with committee members providing feedback and the student completing revisions. That is, the student should not expect to have a "final draft" of the written report until he or she has received and responded to feedback from the members of the supervisory committee, and there may be several rounds at the discretion of the supervisory committee. This is normal procedure for collaborative work and is made explicit here so that students do not feel that the first draft they hand in of their written project is final.
- Following [FGSR guidelines](#), the report should "reveal that the candidate is able to work in a scholarly manner and is acquainted with the principal works published on the subject of the thesis. As far as possible, it should be an original contribution."

The Second-Year Research Project or Master's Thesis

- When the committee decides that the candidate and report are ready, the committee signs the Department's [Preliminary Acceptance of Thesis form](#) and an oral examination is scheduled. For the Master's thesis defense, FGSR must receive three weeks in advance of the exam a signed copy of the [Notice and Approval of Masters Final Oral Examining Committee](#). Composition of the examining committee differs depending on whether the student is defending a SYRP or a Master's thesis. For the SYRP, the examining committee is composed of the student's supervisory committee (the supervisor and two other members, with at least one of the other members from the Department of Psychology), plus one additional faculty member who is neither directly involved nor immediately familiar with the student's research. The additional faculty member may be from the Department of Psychology. If the student is in the Master's program, the composition of the examining committee consists of the supervisory committee plus one member from outside the Department.
- For an oral exam on a SYRP, the examining committee, along with the student, will decide on a suitable forum and procedures for the oral examination. The decision reached by the examining committee determines whether the student has achieved the milestone of "SYRP/Master's oral exam completed successfully." The committee may ask for further changes to the report if it is deemed warranted. A [Second-Year Research Project Report](#) is submitted to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies along with a copy of the SYRP final report.
- The defense of a Master's thesis must follow [FGSR procedures](#) and the departmental guidelines for [Oral Examinations](#). Master's theses should conform to the FGSR's regulations regarding the preparation of theses and must be submitted to FGSR for approval within six months of the date of the thesis oral defense.

Psychology Graduate Policy Documents  
The Second-Year Research Project or Master's Thesis

**Revision History**

Amended September, 1999

Revised August, 2003

Editorial revision April, 2004

Amended November 10, 2004

Editorial revision November 2008

Revised based on motion in Department Council April 29, 2011

**Department of Psychology Second-  
Year Research Project (SYRP) Report**

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Oral Examination: \_\_\_\_\_

**Members of the Examining Committee**

1. \_\_\_\_\_(Supervisor)
2. \_\_\_\_\_(Member of Supervisory Committee)
3. \_\_\_\_\_(Member of Supervisory Committee)
4. \_\_\_\_\_(Additional Member)
5. \_\_\_\_\_(Optional Additional Member)

**Decision of the Examining Committee**

- Unanimous agreement that the project was completed successfully
- Majority agreement that the project was completed successfully
- Unanimous agreement that the project was not completed successfully
- Majority agreement that the project was not completed successfully

Signature of Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please complete this form at the end of the oral exam and submit it to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies, along with a final copy of the SYRP paper.*