# NCS – PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM PRACTICES

Questions 1A, 1B - Communication with Potential Doctoral Students
Questions 2A, 2B – Admission
Questions 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D – Orientation and Advisement
Questions 4A, 4B – Social Interactions

| | Questions | Answers |
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| 1A | When potential graduate students contact your department for information, who handles the inquiries? (Please provide the title rather than names) | Director of Graduate Programs, followed -- as appropriate -- by communication with one or more of the Coordinators of our five individual programs. |
| 1B | What type of information is usually sent in response to such inquiries? | The most common route of inquiry is currently an email. Thus, an individualized email message is returned to the potential student. That message contains boiler plate on programs and procedures, personal answers to specific questions asked, and attachments of soft-copy, 3-4 page, PDF brochure(s) for any program(s) in which the student has indicated a particular interest, as well as a shorter PDF "Information Sheet" on the department as a whole. |
| 2A | Who in your department makes the decision about which applicants to admit (or to recommend for admission)? (Please provide the title rather than names). | The faculty of each program reviews all applications to their program and then meet to make admissions decisions. The Coordinator for each program passes his/her faculty's recommendations to the Director of Graduate Programs. If the DGP concurs with the decisions, the recommendations are forwarded to the Graduate School. (Although the DGP has the authority to refuse to forward a recommendation, this is a prerogative, which is seldom exercised.) Finally, the Graduate School is responsible for making a final determination and for issuing the formal letter of acceptance. |
| 2B | What criteria are used in making this decision? | Difficult to answer, because each program uses different weightings. Among the factors considered are the undergraduate GPA, GRE scores (including the Advanced Subject Test for one program), letters of |

| | | recommendation, and previous extent of (and proficiency at) research. The apparent match between applicant's research interests and the interests of available faculty is also an important factor. |
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| 3A | How does your department orient new students to graduate study? | 1) We communicate information periodically throughout the summer months prior to matriculation. (2) We have a half-day orientation program a few days before the start of classes. (3) All entering students, regardless of previous graduate work elsewhere, enroll for a 1-credit course during their first Fall semester; a portion of this course is devoted to orientation -- to the department and university and to psychology as a field and a profession. (4) Each new student is assigned both an initial faculty adviser (until he/she can put together a formal Advisory Committee) and a "mentor" from among the advanced graduate students in her/his own program. |
| 3B | Who handles initial course advisement for new doctoral students, and how is that person selected? | Each student enters with an assigned faculty adviser. A program's faculty usually does selection of that individual at the time of the admissions decisions. Our graduate-student organization handles selection of the student mentor. |
| 3C | Describe the process by which a student selects or is assigned a dissertation chair. | Often the initial adviser becomes the Chair of the student's Advisory Committee. If not, then the student usually selects a faculty member with whom he/she has taken course-work and with whom she/he shares common research interests. It is the student's responsibility to find a Chair; inability to find a Chair could jeopardize continuation, although I haven't yet seen this happen. The primary rule is that the Chair (or one of two Co-Chairs) must be a regular faculty member (not an adjunct) in the student's particular program; other members may come from varied fields. |
| 3D | Can students in your department change dissertation chairs? If so, how is that change accomplished? | Yes. If the change remains within a program, the student simply obtains appropriate signatures from the former Chair/members and the new Chair/members, as well as the agreement of |

| | | the Director of Graduate Programs. A formal change is then sent to the Graduate School. If a student wishes to change from one program to another, the process is more involved. The student must in effect "apply" to the new program (like any brand-new applicant, except that no additional fee is imposed). If the faculty of the new program accepts the student, then the same paperwork as above will accomplish the switch. Such changes are not uncommon. Every student must, however, at all times, have a program "home." There is never supposed to be a student without a program or a student "between" programs. |
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| 4A | Other than formal coursework, does your department offer, sponsor, or support activities designed to foster social support and/or collaborative learning among doctoral students? (E.g., study groups, student organizations, student-student mentoring programs) If so, please describe. | We have a department-wide graduate student organization called GrASP -- for Graduate Association of Students in Psychology. It runs several social activities (including monthly coffee/donuts gatherings of students/faculty/staff, as well as departmental gatherings at the end of each semester). GrASP is also heavily involved in operating two departmental picnics each year and providing a student liaison to faculty meetings and representatives for special functions, such as any faculty search committees. Some of the individual programs have more specialized groups, which are often organized as student chapters of national professional groups. Some events are sponsored/financed by the department. Fees from the University Graduate Student Association finance others. The department supports all such activities and faculty is always in attendance. There is a student-student mentoring program for first-year graduate students (see previous answers). Starting with the Fall 2004 semester, senior graduate students presented six 15-minute topics to the new students in the Orientation course -- these included discussions of how to balance work/life, recreational activities in the area, |

|    |                                                                                                                                                                       | development of one's resume, etc. They supplemented the traditional orientation material presented by faculty; this "Student Snapshot Series" was suggested by a group of graduate students and was completely organized by volunteers from GrASP. Although students frequently form study alliances, there is no formal departmental process for establishing such groups. |
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| 4B | Does your department hold regular social activities in which students can interact informally with faculty members and other students? If so, please describe | See previous answer. Coffee and Conversation meetings, picnics, end-of-semester gatherings at a local public venue. Program students interact frequently in less formal settings with the faculty of those programs. |