Graduate Studies, Office of the Dean
York University

230 York Lanes - 4700 Keele Street
Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3

Tel: (416) 736-5521
gradstudies.yorku.ca

Change to Program/Graduate Diploma Academic Requirements Proposal Form

The following information is required for all proposals involving a minor modification to program/graduate diploma academic requirements. To facilitate the review/approval process, please use the headings below (and omit the italicized explanations below each heading).

1. Program/Graduate Diploma: Graduate Program in Psychology: Social-Personality and Brain, Behaviour Cognitive Sciences Areas

2. Effective Session of Proposed Change(s): September 2022

3. Proposed Change(s) and Rationale
The description of and rationale for the proposed modification(s) should provide information with respect to each of the following points:

a) A description of the proposed modification(s) and rationale, including alignment with academic plans.

Proposed Modifications: As detailed in our rationale below, a review of the course requirements for comparable graduate programs in Social-Personality Psychology and Cognitive Psychology / Cognitive Neuroscience suggest that our current course requirements are high. While providing valuable training opportunities, course work can also constrain students' time for other valuable training experiences, including their opportunities to develop and pursue their program of research, which ultimately impacts their research productivity. Given our desire to support research excellence among our students and to facilitate greater competitiveness for our students on the academic job market, we propose reducing the number of required courses by 3.0 credits at the PhD level. Specifically, we proposed removing the History and Theory requirement at the PhD level (PSYC 6020 or PSYC 6030) from SP and BBCS course requirements.

Rationale:

The Social-Personality area conducts a year-end survey of our graduate students each year to understand what they see as the strengths of our program and what they believe could be improved upon. The Brain Behaviour Cognitive Science (BBCS) area members review the program requirements on an ongoing basis. While the members and the graduate students are satisfied with respect to the research opportunities and experiences, they are concerned with the heavy course requirements in our program. The major concern is that the heavy course load limits the time that students can devote to research and to developing a competitive publication record. The impression is that comparable research-intensive Canadian programs have a lighter course load at the MA, which provides students at other institutions with more time to conduct research at an earlier stage in their careers. Given the time it can take to go from early research stages to publication, this can ultimately result in those students being more competitive on the academic job market and when applying for graduate scholarships.

Graduate Studies, Office of the Dean
York University

230 York Lanes - 4700 Keele Street
Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3

Tel: (416) 736-5521
gradstudies.yorku.ca

In response to these comments and after reflecting on their own personal experiences with other graduate programs, Dr. Joey Cheng and Dr. Amy Muise conducted a comparative review of top Social-Personality programs in Canada (i.e., University of Toronto, UBC, and McGill) to determine if we do, in fact, have a higher course load than other research-oriented programs. This review provided strong evidence that our course load is, indeed, higher than these programs. As an example, our review revealed that, compared to the University of Toronto, our MA students are required to complete 3 extra courses, and our PhD students complete 2 extra courses (i.e., 5 extra courses in total across both MA and PhD). As another example, compared to McGill, our MA and PhD students complete 2 extra courses at each level (i.e., 4 extra courses in total across both MA and PhD).

Dr. Erez Freud recently conducted a comparative review of top cognitive programs in Canada that offer MA and PhD programs (i.e., UBC, McMaster, and McGill) to determine if we do, in fact, have a higher course load than other research-oriented programs. This review provided strong evidence that our course load is, indeed, higher than these programs. As an example, our review revealed that, compared to the McMaster, our MA students are required to complete 2 extra courses, and our PhD students complete 2 extra courses (i.e., 4 extra courses in total across both MA and PhD). As another example, compared to McGill, our MA and PhD students complete 1 extra courses at each level (i.e., 2 extra courses in total across both MA and PhD).

These comparisons confirm the impressions of both faculty and students that our program is, indeed, course heavy, imposing constraints on student productivity in research during their training in our program. Therefore, one key goal with this proposed change is to reduce the course requirements in our MA program to be more in line with other top Canadian programs, while still maintaining our program learning objectives.

As part of our strategic planning this year, we identified (a) supporting research excellence and impact among our students as well as (b) supporting our students in completing their degree within the specified program timelines, as important goals. For students applying to academic jobs, numerous publications, including several first authored publications in conjunction with other collaborative publications, are required to be competitive. In our field, many top journals require multiple studies in a single publication. It is not uncommon for a single publication to report 4-6 studies.

To illustrate, in 2019, the Society of Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP) published a report of academic job market characteristics and outcomes in Social-Personality psychology. As summarized in the table below, a key finding of this report is that, at the time of application, the average applicant has 7 total publications (when they first go on the job market) and as many as 13.9 total publications (by the third time they go on the job market). Of these publications, 3.3 (first time on market) to 6.9 (third time on market) are first-authored publications.

Graduate Studies, Office of the Dean
York University

230 York Lanes - 4700 Keele Street
Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3

Tel: (416) 736-5521
gradstudies.yorku.ca

Table 14. Descriptive statistics of the number of manuscripts by time in the job market.

Manuscript Type	1st Time				2nd Time				3rd Time			
	n	M	SD	Mdn	n	M	SD	Mdn	n	M	SD	Mdn
Total Published	263	7.0	5.3	6.0	123	10.0	7.1	8.0	45	13.9	9.9	11.0
1st-Author	262	3.3	3.1	3.0	123	4.8	4.4	4.0	45	6.9	5.5	6.0
Empirical	261	5.3	4.9	4.0	123	7.5	6.1	6.0	45	10.5	8.3	8.0
Under Review	251	2.3	1.7	2.0	115	2.4	2.0	2.0	42	3.4	3.3	2.0
Under Review, 1st-Author	231	1.7	1.2	2.0	112	1.5	1.2	2.0	42	2.2	1.9	2.0
In-Prep	250	3.2	2.4	3.0	111	3.2	2.6	3.0	41	4.7	4.4	3.0
Total published, under review and in prep	245	12.3	7.1	11.0	110	14.8	9.0	13.0	41	20.6	13.9	19.0

Note. n = number of respondents per time in the job market; Mdn = Median; M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation.

Source: Social and Personality Psychology PhDs on the Academic Job Market: Characteristics and Outcomes—
A Technical Report by the SPSP Student Committee (report available here)

Moreover, the survey also revealed that "candidates who secured a tenure-track job were more likely to publish in higher impact journals and have a higher self-reported h-index compared to those who did not secure a job" (p. 29).

Together, the findings from the report highlight the importance of any graduate program to facilitate and enable students to dedicate as much of their time and energy as possible towards developing a strong and robust research program. Having adequate time for students to work on multiple research projects during their graduate degree is essential. Reducing our course load as requested will support students in our program in completing their degree in a timely fashion while being productive researchers who are developing a strong program of research that will make them competitive for jobs after graduation.

To come to this decision, our areas had multiple discussions in our faculty meetings, both this past year and in previous years, to consider which courses we could remove without sacrificing the critical training that students will need in order to be successful in their research pursuits and ultimately in their careers as Social-Personality psychologists or cognitive psychologists. After careful reflection and discussion, we decided that we could remove the requirement of the 6020/6030 course, with the goal that students will

Graduate Studies, Office of the Dean
York University

230 York Lanes - 4700 Keele Street
Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3

Tel: (416) 736-5521
gradstudies.yorku.ca

instead devote more of that time to readings and studies that are directly relevant to their program of research. Those who are interested in this course, can still take it as one of their electives.

b) An outline of the changes to requirements and the associated learning outcomes/objectives, including how the proposed requirements will support the achievement of program/graduate diploma learning objectives. *Additionally, please append the graduate program's existing learning outcomes as a separate document.*

In the SP area the proposed changes align with our key learning objectives of training skilled researchers who have in-depth knowledge of theory, methods, and statistical analyses in Social-Personality psychology. In the BBCS area the proposed changes align with our key learning objectives of training skilled researchers who have in-depth knowledge of theory, methods and statistical analyses cognitive psychology and cognitive neuroscience.

Importantly, our proposed changes will in no way affect the strong statistical and methodological training we offer, which we believe is crucial to developing strong research skills. We will also add that within our program, a great deal of students' research training happens outside of coursework. Students learn about research through hands-on experiences. That is, students gain a great deal of research training through their MA thesis, ABC paper, and dissertation, and through additional research projects with their supervisor and in other labs. The SP students also attend Social-Personality research colloquium. A majority of the BBCS students are also affiliated with the Centre for Vision Research and attend a weekly research colloquium. Our goal is to reduce the course requirements to allow student adequate time to engage with high quality research, outside of their thesis and dissertation projects, and be productive researchers

c) An overview of the consultation undertaken with relevant academic units and an assessment of the impact of the modifications on other programs/graduate diplomas.
Where and as appropriate, the proposal must include statements from the relevant program/graduate diplomas confirming consultation/support.

The most relevant academic unit affected by this change is the Social-Personality and BBCS graduate areas. The Social-Personality and BBCS faculty have discussed these changes over at least three faculty meetings, as well as across the years, and have voted unanimously in favour of them. As noted earlier, we have also consulted with the graduate students on our year-end survey and informally in our research labs across the years and have repeatedly heard a request for our course requirements to be reduced. Finally, we have consulted with our graduate program director, Suzanne MacDonald, and have made it clear that there should be no resource implications of this change; if anything, this might reduce our course offerings at the graduate level which may have a net positive in terms of teaching allocation at the undergraduate level.

d) A summary of any resource implications and how they are being addressed.
Attention should be paid to whether the proposed changes will be supported by a reallocation of existing resources or if new/additional resources are required. If new/additional resources are required, the proposal must include a statement from the relevant Dean(s)/Principal.

No new or additional resources will be required.

e) A summary of how students currently enrolled in the program/graduate diploma will be accommodated.

Graduate Studies, Office of the Dean
York University

230 York Lanes - 4700 Keele Street
Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3

Tel: (416) 736-5521
gradstudies.yorku.ca

If approved, we would request that these changes be applied retroactively to students currently in the program.

4. Calendar Copy

Using the following two-column format, provide a copy of the relevant program/graduate diploma requirements as they will appear in the FGS Calendar - http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/current-students/regulations/program-requirements/.

Please note: Senate requires that FULL Calendar copy be provided. Please include the entire *graduate program/diploma section, not just text that is being revised.*

Please clearly and visibly indicate how graduate program/graduate diploma information has been changed using strikethrough (left column), bold, underlining, colours, etc. (right column).

Please note that new proposed changes are crossed out in the left column and underlined plus highlighted in the right column.

Existing Program/Graduate Diploma Information (change from)	Proposed Program/Graduate Diploma Information (change to)
Social and Personality PhD Program 1. Courses a) Psychology 6020 3.0: Historical and Theoretical Foundations of Contemporary Psychology A or Psychology 6030 3.0: Historical and Theoretical Foundations of Contemporary Psychology B; b) Six credits in courses specializing in quantitative methods from the statistics courses offered in graduate psychology, chosen from a list of courses approved by the program; c) Psychology 6410 3.0: Social Psychology or Psychology 6510 3.0: Personality, depending on which of these two courses has already been taken at the MA level; d) One half-course in research methods chosen from a list of courses approved by the area (Psychology 6150E 3.0: Research Methods in the Study of Personality OR Psychology 6150B 3.0: Social Methods); and, e) One half-course or equivalent chosen in consultation with their supervisor, from those offered at the 6000 level.	**Social and Personality PhD Program** 1. Courses a) Six credits in courses specializing in quantitative methods from the statistics courses offered in graduate psychology, chosen from a list of courses approved by the program. b) Psychology 6410 3.0: Social Psychology or Psychology 6510 3.0: Personality, depending on which of these two courses has already been taken at the MA level. c) One half-course in research methods chosen from a list of courses approved by the area (Psychology 6150E 3.0: Non-Experimental Research Methods in Social-Personality Psychology OR Psychology 6150B 3.0: Experimental Research Methods in Social-Personality Psychology); and, d) One half-course or equivalent chosen in consultation with their supervisor, from those offered at the 6000 level.

graduate studies | YORK U
UNIVERSITÉ
UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies, Office of the Dean
York University

230 York Lanes - 4700 Keele Street
Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3

Tel: (416) 736-5521
gradstudies.yorku.ca

BBCS Psychology PhD Program
  1. Courses
• **Six credits in quantitative methods from the statistics courses offered in graduate psychology**
• 6020 3.0 - Historical & Theoretical Foundations of Contemporary Psychology A OR 6030 3.0 - Historical & Theoretical Foundations of Contemporary Psychology B
• **Three 3- credit courses or equivalent from those offered at the 6000 level by the Graduate Program**

BBCS Psychology PhD Program
  1. Courses
• **Six credits in quantitative methods from the statistics courses offered in graduate psychology**
• **Three 3- credit courses or equivalent from those offered at the 6000 level by the Graduate Program**