

Faculty/Student Handbook for Graduate Academic and Thesis Advising Department of Psychological Science



2025-2026 Academic Year

**Graduate Program Coordinator
Dr. Carolyn R. Fallahi**

Introduction

The Department of Psychological Science offers the Master of Arts in Psychology, with specializations in Community Psychology, Health Psychology, and General Psychology.

Community Psychology: Develop skills to conduct research and/or be an active stakeholder in a variety of research and community organizations. Learn and practice community-based participatory, ecological, and mixed-method approaches through coursework and internships. Prepare for work that will increase empowerment and advance social justice among various communities.

Health Psychology: Understand the biological, behavioral, and social factors of health and illness. Develop interventions to foster health (e.g., prep work for biofeedback technician

certification). Prepare for work in human services, non-profit organizations, primary care and other medical settings, and/or go on to doctoral programs in Health Psychology.

General Psychology: Highly flexible program allows you to tailor your course selection to follow your individual interests in the field. Rigorous entry-level training prepares you to pursue your doctorate in Psychology or another field.

Graduate Learning Outcomes

- LO1: Summarize and critically evaluate scholarly literature.
- LO2: Design, conduct and analyze scientific empirical research.
- LO3: Communicate with professional-level skill in oral and written contexts.
- LO4: Critically analyze and integrate psychological theory in applied and/or real-life situations.
- LO5: Identify career options and understand the processes to pursue them.

Common Core: All MA students take the following common core classes.

PSY 501 Thesis and Capstone Preparation 1 credit – *recommended to be taken in your first semester in the program.*

PSY 596 Psychological Research: Design and Analysis I - 4 credits

PSY 597 Psychological Research: Design and Analysis II – 4 credits

PSY 599 Thesis or Capstone*

*Whether you are doing a thesis or capstone, you must have a proposal meeting and an oral defense of your thesis or capstone.

*If you are doing a thesis instead of a capstone, then you will need to take PSY 591 Advanced Independent Reading and Research in Psychology as one of your electives. Your thesis advisor will sign you up for PSY 591 as an independent study (thesis proposal) the semester BEFORE you take PSY 599 (thesis completion).

* Note: A **maximum of six credits at the 400 level may be included**, with approval of a faculty advisor, in the planned program of study. We allow only two undergraduate courses to count for graduate credit: PSY 450 Biopsychology or PSY 458 Human Neuropsychology or PSY 451 Psychological Evaluation can be taken for graduate credit. To receive graduate credit, you **MUST inform your professor that you are taking the course for graduate credit and** complete additional graduate-level assignments as deemed appropriate by the instructor of the course.

Community Psychology Specialization (36 credits):

The community psychology specialization is designed to train students to be active practitioners in the prevention field or prepare them for further study. Community psychologists take an ecological systems approach to develop and implement community level interventions that can prevent the onset of psychological problems (e.g., substance abuse, interpersonal violence, and depression), which often involves collaboration with a community-partner (e.g., nonprofits, government, schools). Community psychologists also conduct evaluation research to provide empirical evidence of program efficacy. Most of our graduates work in the program planning and development level of local and state government, non-profit organizations, and schools, although

some work in direct service positions. If you are interested in learning more about our Community Psychology Specialization or the field of Community Psychology (CP), reach out to our CP faculty (Drs. Thai, Brott, and Swanson).

Required Courses for Community Psychology Specialization

Common Core

PSY 501 Thesis and Capstone Preparation (1 credit)
 PSY 596 Psychological Research: Design and Analysis 1 (4 credits)
 PSY 597 Psychological Research Design and Analysis II (4 credits)
 PSY 599 Thesis (3 credits)

Additional Required Courses:

PSY 520 Global Psychology (3 credits)
 PSY 550 Community Psychology (3 credits)
 PSY 551 Prevention and Community-Based Research (3 credits)
 PSY 553 Evaluation Research (3 credits)
 PSY 595 Graduate Internship in Psychological Applications (3 credits)
 Directed electives as approved by advisor (15 credits)

Fall Year 1 PSY 501 PSY 596 PSY 550	Spring Year 1 PSY 551 PSY 553 PSY 597
Fall Year 2 PSY 595 PSY 591 Elective	Spring Year 2 PSY 599 Elective Elective

Health Psychology Specialization (39 credits):

The health psychology specialization is designed to prepare students for a career in the field of health psychology or for further graduate study. Graduates often go on to doctoral programs, and others work in a variety of research and human service settings where they can apply knowledge of health-related behaviors, stress, disease risk factors, and methods to improve health and chronic illness. Some also work in the area of prevention. If you are interested in learning more about our Health Psychology Specialization or the field of Health Psychology (HP), reach out to our HP faculty (Drs. Marín-Chollom, Tör-Çabuk, and Marfo).

Required Courses for Health Psychology Specialization

Common Core:

PSY 501 Thesis and Capstone Preparation (1 credit)
 PSY 596 Psychological Research: Design and Analysis 1 (4 credits)
 PSY 597 Psychological Research Design and Analysis II (4 credits)
 PSY 599 Thesis (3 credits)

Additional Required Courses:

PSY 541 Health Psychology (3 credits)
 PSY 542 Psychology of Stress (3 credits)
 PSY 543 Stress Management: Theory & Research (3 credits)

PSY 547 Clinical Health Psychology and Chronic Illness (3 credits) PSY 595 Graduate Internship in Psychological Applications (3 credits) Directed electives (12 credits)
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General Psychology Specializations (36 credits):

The general psychology specialization is designed to give students the opportunity to follow their interests. The specialization provides solid preparation in core areas of psychology, including developmental, clinical, social and community psychology and research methodology. General psychology MA graduates often go on to doctoral programs, but many also work in a variety of research and human services settings. If you are interested in learning more about our General Psychology specialization, reach out to our Graduate Coordinator, Dr. Carolyn Fallahi.

Required Courses for General Psychology Specialization

Common Core

PSY 501 Thesis and Capstone Preparation (1 credit)
PSY 596 Psychological Research: Design and Analysis I (4 credits)
PSY 597 Psychological Research Design and Analysis II (4 credits)
PSY 599 Thesis (3 credits)

Additional Required Courses

PSY 512 Seminar in Developmental Psychology (3 credits)
ONE of the following 3 classes:

PSY 545 Introduction to Clinical Psychology (3 credits)

PSY 550 Community Psychology (3 credits)

Directed electives as approved by advisor (18 credits)

Possible Electives

PSY 511 Psychology of Aging
PSY 512 Seminar in Developmental Psychology
PSY 520 Global Psychology
PSY 530 Psychopathology
PSY 544 Biofeedback: Principles and Practices
PSY 545 Introduction to Clinical Psychology
PSY 553 Evaluation Research
PSY 585 Professional Development in Oral Presentations
PSY 590 Advanced Topics in Psychology
PSY 591 Advanced Independent Reading and Research in Psychology
PSY 595 Graduate Internship in Psychological Applications

Internships (PSY 595)

Internships are mandatory for students in the Community and Health specializations but may be taken as an elective in the General Psychology specialization. These internships should closely align with the objectives of your chosen area of specialization. A faculty advisor is required to supervise your internship. Some faculty members may have established contacts for internships, while others are willing to supervise internships that you find and arrange independently.

If the internship is being sponsored by the university for the first time, additional steps, such as establishing contracts between the university and the host organization, may be necessary.

Students typically complete internships during their third or fourth semester in the program. To avoid delays, begin planning early.

If you encounter difficulties finding a faculty sponsor or arranging an internship, please contact the Program Coordinator for assistance.

To sign up for PSY 596 Graduate Internship in Psychological Applications, faculty complete the following form:

https://docs.ccsu.edu/Independent_Study_Course_Registration.pdf

Additional Elective Options: Courses from other departments: Students historically have taken classes from other departments when appropriate (e.g., Math, Education, Business, Computer Science, etc.). Check with the Graduate Coordinator in the Department of Psychological Science for more information.

Statistics: If you are interested in improving your quantitative skills, you can take graduate statistics courses in the math department. You will need to meet with Dr. Saha from the math department to have him evaluate which courses you are eligible to take. In addition, some students join faculty research teams and participate in analyzing and interpreting statistics as part of creating posters and papers for professional presentations and publications.

Counseling: If you complete our program and decide that you would like to become a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), you can apply to the Advanced Official Certificate Program in Professional Counseling. While they do not allow students to take any coursework while they are currently in our program, if accepted into the certificate program several of our courses will count towards certification. For more information, please contact the chair of the department of Counselor Education and Family Therapy.

Academic Graduate Advisor

In Fall 2024, the department introduced a new position: Graduate Program Coordinator. The Graduate Program Coordinator will serve as the primary advisor for coursework and all matters related to the graduate program. Please note that this role is distinct from your thesis or capstone advisor—though, of course, the Graduate Program Coordinator could also serve as your thesis or capstone advisor!

In general, a **graduate advisor** acts as the newly enrolled student's first source of academic information. The academic advisor and the advisee work together to create the students *planned program of study*. The planned program is a form that is required and should be filled out in the student's first semester. The advisor helps the advisee to choose the courses they will take to complete their degree over the next 4 semesters. A set of core courses is required of all M.A. students and specific core courses for each specialization. After the required courses are placed on the degree plan, students have a choice of electives appropriate to their specialization. Even though the planned program is completed in the first semester, if changes are required, students will work with the academic advisor to make the necessary changes and re-submit the form. Accelerate students DO NOT complete the planned program until they have graduated with their BA in Psychological Science.

Link for the planned program form – General: <https://docs.ccsu.edu/grad-planned-programs/Psychology-General-MA.pdf>.

Link for the planned program form – Community: <https://docs.ccsu.edu/grad-planned-programs/Psychology-Community-MA.pdf>.

Link for the planned program form – Health: <https://docs.ccsu.edu/grad-planned-programs/Psychology-Health-MA.pdf>.

Information about the Culminating Experience

All M.A. students are required to complete a culminating experience, which can take the form of either a research-based, data-driven thesis or a capstone project (although the university calls both of them capstones). Regardless of the option selected, your culminating experience will be completed as an independent study (PSY 599) under faculty supervision. Faculty from the department serve as advisors to guide students through either of these options.

The culminating experience offers two distinct pathways:

- **Option A:** An empirical thesis, which is similar in structure and rigor to an article published in a peer-reviewed psychological journal. This thesis includes a comprehensive literature review, detailed methodology, data collection, results, and a discussion of the findings. It can employ either quantitative or qualitative research methods.
- **Option B:** A capstone project, which involves an extensive and integrative analysis of a specific topic within the psychological literature. This project critically evaluates existing research to advance understanding in a particular area of psychology.

For more information on these two options: <https://www.ccsu.edu/programs/psychology-ma/thesis-capstone-psychology-ma>.

Initiating Capstone and Thesis Mentorship?

Matches are often made during PSY 501, where students have the opportunity to meet with most of the psychological science faculty. Faculty members visit the class to discuss their research areas and expertise.

To start this process, students should review the descriptions of faculty research interests provided in this manual and found at <https://www.ccsu.edu/psychology/faculty-research>. Identify faculty members whose research aligns with their interests. Students should then schedule a meeting with the selected faculty member to inquire about their availability to take on new students.

If students encounter difficulties in finding a match, they are encouraged to consult the Graduate Program Coordinator who can assist with the process.

Thesis Advisor. Full-time (i.e., 9 graduate-level credits per term) students planning to complete a qualitative or quantitative thesis typically enroll in PSY 591 during their 3rd semester in the program. All students sign up for PSY 599 in their final semester. The course registration for both PSY 591 and 599 are completed by their thesis advisor. Once completed and processed, the course will appear on your schedule.

Course registration for PSY 591:

https://docs.ccsu.edu/Independent_Study_Course_Registration.pdf

Course registration for PSY 599:

<https://www.ccsu.edu/sites/default/files/document/CapstoneCourseRegistration.pdf>

Mentorship

Students and their thesis or capstone advisors collaborate closely, making the mentorship relationship a vital component of the process. To ensure a productive partnership, it is beneficial to have a clear conversation about expectations early on. Students are encouraged to be respectful and proactive in communicating their needs to their advisor, particularly regarding the preferred structure of their working relationship. For example, some students may benefit from regular, scheduled meetings, while others might prefer to meet after completing significant portions of work.

Key topics to discuss with your advisor include the writing timeline, deadlines for draft submissions, and other relevant milestones. Additionally, students should have a strong understanding of APA style, as all papers in the graduate program must adhere to this format.

Thesis Committee. The student, in consultation with the thesis advisor, will select two additional thesis committee members, typically from the Department of Psychological Science, but can be from other Departments or even schools. Committee members may be selected from outside the Department if they have particular expertise in the project area, in consultation with their thesis advisor. Members of the thesis committee act as project evaluators for the thesis proposal and final thesis project. **Students should not choose a committee member without consultation with their thesis advisor.**

For both the thesis and the capstone, there is a proposal meeting and a defense meeting with all committee members. Students should send their proposal or completed thesis/capstone to committee members at least two weeks before the scheduled meeting or defense. As everyone has busy schedules, meetings should be scheduled well in advance.

Students should not send their proposal or thesis/capstone to committee members until it has been approved by the thesis advisor and is considered a quality final draft. The committee members will send feedback to the student and/or the thesis advisor, either prior to the proposal meeting or after, depending on the preferences of the thesis advisor.

All thesis and capstone defenses are public. The thesis advisor sends out a notice announcing the presentation time and date of the defense at least one week prior to the defense. All members of the department and the campus can attend.

The thesis advisor oversees the entire thesis process. The student and thesis advisor work together and the advisor guides the student through the process. It begins with selecting the topic, designing the study or capstone review, submission of IRB proposal, data collection, analysis and interpretation, and any processes that must be covered to complete the thesis.

Student and Faculty Responsibilities for Thesis/Capstone Projects

The student's obligations for a thesis/capstone are as follows:

- Openly communicate throughout the thesis process
- Work with my faculty/thesis advisor to develop a thesis project
- Be respectful, motivated, responsive, and open to intellectual critique
- Establish and follow an agreed upon timeline for each phase of work
- Meet regularly with my thesis advisor and provide my advisor with updates on the progress
- Work with my thesis advisor to select a thesis committee and be responsive to their constructive criticism
- Maintain a detailed, organized, and accurate record of my research
- Discuss policies on work schedules and any absences
- Discuss policies on authorship and publication
- Discuss attendance at professional meetings
- Work with my thesis advisor to submit all relevant research results that are ready for publication (if any) in a timely manner
- Be knowledgeable about, and guide the student through the requirements and deadlines of the thesis

Thesis Advisor Commitment

The faculty advisor's obligations are as follows:

- Encourage critical thinking, skepticism and creativity
- Set reasonable and attainable goals
- Foster open communication throughout the relationship.
- Be accessible and respectful
- Establish a timeline for completion and point out if timelines are not? being met
- Be committed to meet with the student on a regular basis
- Be knowledgeable about, and guide the student through the requirements and deadlines of the thesis
- Help the graduate student select a thesis committee
- Ensure that this committee meets when needed and review the thesis and the student's progress
- Mentor thesis student in complementary skills needed to complete the thesis (oral and written communication, ethical conduct of research, and scientific professionalism)
- Discuss authorship policies regarding papers and work with the graduate student to publish his/her work in a timely manner if agreed upon
- Encourage the graduate student to attend professional meetings
- Provide honest letters of recommendation for the next phase of professional development

Select Faculty Research Interests and Supervision Availability

***Please note that not all faculty chose to participate in stating their availability. That does not mean that they are not available to work with students.**

Dr. Carrie Andreoletti

- **Availability:** Open to supervising 1 student, depending on project type, happy to serve on committees
 - **Content Areas/Populations:**
 - Attitudes and stereotypes about aging and older adults, benefits of intergenerational connections, health and well-being across the lifespan.
 - **Methods:** Quantitative
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Dr. Julia Blau

- **Availability:** Not taking students this academic year, but willing to serve on a committee
 - **Content Areas/Populations:**
 - Ecological Psychology. Perception, action, cognition, ecological aesthetics and art. Film theory.
 - Statistics for quantitative data.
 - **Methods:** Quantitative, primary experimental, Fractal analysis.
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Dr. Caleb Bragg

- **Availability:** Supervising 1-2 students in spring
 - **Content Areas/Populations:**
 - Workplace and organizational topics (e.g., experiential learning, career readiness, early career success, employee well-being, technology/AI in organizations)
 - Prefers working with employed populations or career-ready students
 - Translational literacy, Dyadic Calibration, Human AI Integration, VR Training.
 - **Methods:** Applied research, survey designs, multiple regression
 - **Additional Notes:** Treats students as junior research colleagues; expects self-driven goal setting
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Dr. Holly Brott

- **Availability:** No availability
 - **Content Areas/Populations:**
 - Housing insecurity and homelessness
 - Reproductive Justice
 - Community inclusion for individuals with disabilities
 - Program evaluation
 - Community-based research with nonprofit or foundation collaborations
 - **Methods:** Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods
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Dr. Lindsey Cole

- **Availability:** Not available at this time.
 - **Content Areas/Populations:**
 - Psychology and law
 - Legal socialization, juvenile justice and delinquency, attitudes toward the law and police, decision making in the law
 - **Methods:** Primarily quantitative, with some qualitative and mixed methods.
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Dr. Silvia Corbera Lopez

- **Availability:** Supervising no new students in the Fall and potentially 1-2 in the spring.
 - **Content Areas/Populations:**
 - Social Cognitive and Affective Neurosciences, Cognitive Neuroscience, and Clinical Cognitive Neuroscience
 - Research on empathy, emotion regulation, emotion processing, Theory of Mind, rejection, and ostracism in both healthy and clinical populations (e.g., schizophrenia, autism spectrum disorder)
 - Open to new interests within the described fields and willing to work with undergraduates and other populations in clinical settings
 - **Methods:** Quantitative; SPSS; methods include surveys, interviews, cognitive testing, eye-tracking, EEG, and computerized experimental paradigms
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Dr. Carolyn Fallahi

- **Availability:** Supervising up to 5 new students per semester
 - **Content Areas/Populations:**
 - Research in minority stress, sexual and gender minorities, mental health diagnoses, and vicarious exposure to trauma
 - Open to considering topics outside these listed areas
 - **Methods:** Primarily quantitative; starting to incorporate qualitative measures
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Dr. Giselle Ferguson

- **Availability:** Not available at this time.
 - **Content Areas/Populations:**
 - Lifespan (across adulthood) and older adult samples
 - Affect, stress, personality, cognitive function, and their interactions, especially in daily life
 - **Methods:** Quantitative, with some use of quantitative textual analysis; secondary data analyses; ecological momentary assessment and multi-level modelling
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Dr. Andrea June

- **Availability:** Supervising 1-2 students, depending on project type
 - **Content Areas/Populations:**
 - Death and dying, bereavement, end-of-life health care, clinical geropsychology, and age inclusivity
 - Research should focus on older adults
 - **Methods:** Quantitative, primarily survey-based
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Dr. Amanda M. Marín-Chollom

- **Availability:** Available to take 2-4 students new students this academic year
- **Content Areas/Populations:**
 - Anything within the field of Health Psychology
 - Chronic Illness
 - Health Prevention
 - Ethnic Minority Health
 - Stress and Coping
 - Women's Health

- Health Disparities
 - Latino/a/e Psychology
 - **Methods:** Quantitative, Qualitative, and mixed methods
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Dr. Jason Sikorski

- **Availability:** Not taking students for this academic year
 - **Content Areas/Populations:**
 - Clinical psychology, masculinity, toxic masculinity, teaching, and mentoring
 - Open to a broad range of clinical psychology topics
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Dr. Skyler Sklenarik

- **Availability:** Open to supervising 1 student in the spring
 - **Content Areas/Populations:**
 - Behavioral neuroscience; cognitive neuroscience; clinical neuroscience
 - Substance use (e.g., nicotine/e-cigarette use, cannabis use, alcohol use) and other addictive behaviors
 - Classical and operant conditioning processes
 - Secondary interests: anxiety disorders; fear conditioning processes; biological sex differences
 - **Methods:** Quantitative; methods include surveys, computerized experimental paradigms, and virtual reality (VR)
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Dr. Helena Swanson

- **Availability:** Supervising 0 students in fall, 1 in spring
 - **Content Areas/Populations:**
 - Food and housing insecurity in college students
 - Intersectionality of older age with other marginalized identities
 - Intergenerational programming, ageism, aging in place, and program evaluations
 - Research related to advancing social justice movements and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory
 - Community-based research with nonprofit or foundation collaborations
 - **Methods:** Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods, including GIS mapping and community development projects
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Dr. Nghi Thai

- **Availability:** Supervising 1-2 students per semester
 - **Content Areas/Populations:**
 - Community-based research with nonprofit or foundation collaborations
 - Program evaluation
 - Other topics related to community psychology
 - **Methods:** Qualitative and mixed methods
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Dr. Rebecca Wood

- **Availability:** Dr. Wood is accepting graduate students
 - **Content Areas/Populations:**
 - Adults' behavioral and physiological responses to infants' communicative signals
 - Biofeedback and its ability to give us tools to cope with stressful situations, relax when needed, and improve focus.
 - **Methods:** Primarily quantitative methods.
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Dr. Nana Yaa Marfo

- **Availability:** Supervising 1 new student per semester
 - **Content Areas/Populations:**
 - Sociocultural and structural barriers and facilitators to health equity
 - Effectiveness of existing treatments for marginalized populations
 - Stress and coping
 - Topics in clinical health psychology
 - Topics in clinical psychology
 - **Methods:** Primarily quantitative and secondary data analysis, but also mixed methods
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Dr. KubraTor-Cabuk

- **Availability:** 2 new students per semester
- **Content Areas/Populations**
 - Healthcare utilization, medical discrimination, patient-provider communication, and health disparities among Muslim Americans and other underserved populations
 - Open to mentoring students with interests in structural and social determinants of health, intersectionality, and culturally responsive care

- **Methods:** Qualitative (thematic analysis), Quantitative (t-test, ANOVA, regression analysis, latent profile analysis, multilevel modeling, and structural equation modeling), and Mixed methods

Resources

Resources available on the Graduate Studies Website: <https://www.ccsu.edu/graduate-studies/resources>

Example Theses and Capstones

https://cscu-ccsu-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/collectionDiscovery?vid=CCSU_V1&inst=CCSU&collectionId=8162244460003453&lang=en_US&query=any,contains,psychology

Formatting

The graduate school has a quick formatting guide: <https://www.ccsu.edu/sites/default/files/2024-03/Thesis%20and%20Special%20Project%20Quick%20Guide%20%281%29.pdf>

APA resources – available in the Resources content area on your PSY 501 course Blackboard page.

Submitting Your Final Thesis

The following form will be completed by your advisor once you have successfully defended your thesis: <https://www.ccsu.edu/sites/default/files/document/FinalCapstoneSubmission.pdf>

This form, along with a finalized copy of your thesis (incorporating all committee-approved edits overseen by your advisor), will be submitted to the graduate school for approval by your thesis advisor. In addition, once you have successfully defended your thesis, the following library form must be completed for your thesis to be available and housed in the library:

<https://www.ccsu.edu/sites/default/files/document/ThesisandDissertationPublicAccessApprovalForm1.pdf>