

SECTION 22: PROGRAMME REGULATIONS

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES AND

THE ROLE OF THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS

This section gives an overview of programme regulations and assessment procedures, and the role of the Board of Examiners in overseeing these procedures.

It includes information about:

- entrance qualifications for the Course
- the structure of the Course
- the ways in which academic, clinical and research competences are assessed
- the number of times failed course components can be retaken
- how the Board of Examiners is constituted and how it carries out its functions
- procedures for appealing against a decision of the Board of Examiners

Trainees can find more detailed information about procedures used for passing and failing each area of the course in Sections 24 to 27 of this handbook.

The Board of Examiners overviews trainees' progress and is empowered by the University to make decisions about whether trainees have passed or failed the Course. It does so by considering whether they have fulfilled course requirements, and in reaching its judgments takes into account any relevant extenuating circumstances or the outcomes of any appeals procedures.

PROGRAMME REGULATIONS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY (D.Clin.Psy.)

These regulations should be read in conjunction with the Academic Regulations for: Professional Doctorates. These can be found on the Registry website, at:

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-manual/sites/academic-manual/files/chapter_5_part_b_professional_doctorate_regulations_2020-21.pdf

1. Entrance Qualifications

1.1 The normal minimum entrance qualification for registration for the degree of Doctor in Clinical Psychology is an upper second class honours degree with Psychology as the main field of study, or an appropriate Master's Degree or Diploma, qualifying the applicant for Graduate Basis for Chartering (GBC) with the British Psychological Society. Applicants should also have at least one year's relevant clinical experience. In exceptional circumstances (and subject to the approval of the authorities of the College), consideration may be given to those without such clinical experience.

2. Duration of Programme of Study

Full-time: three calendar years

3. Curriculum

3.1 The course of study for the degree of Doctor in Clinical Psychology includes formally taught and practical elements, which provide academic and clinical underpinning for the research undertaken. Candidates are required to complete four case studies, one piece of service-related research and undertake a substantial piece of research resulting in a thesis.

3.1.1 *Formally Taught Elements*

The teaching programme will cover methods of clinical psychological research, statistics and basic research on the psychological models of clinical disorders, methods of assessment and interventions in a range of clinical areas.

3.1.2 *Practical Experience*

Candidates will be expected to acquire supervised clinical experience with a number of clinical populations in accordance with the requirements of the Health Professions Council (HPC) and the British Psychological Society (BPS) which would qualify successful candidates to become eligible to apply for registration with the Health Professions Council and for recognition as a chartered Clinical Psychologist with the BPS.

3.1.3 *Case Studies and Service-Related Research*

Three case studies and one piece of service-related research, which shall total approximately 13,000 words, shall be completed.

3.1.4 *Thesis*

The length of the thesis shall be approximately 25,000 words, with a maximum of 40,000 words.

The overall research submission (3.1.3 and 3.1.4) shall illustrate the candidate's ability to apply scientific psychological principles at various levels of application of clinical psychological knowledge.

4. Assessment and Oral Examinations

4.1 All assessments, including the assessment of clinical competence, will be overseen by examiners external to the University.

4.2 Written examinations qualifying a candidate for submission of the thesis will take place in the first two years of the course and will comprise:

- (i) a 3-hour written examination in year 1, assessing the theory and application of clinical psychological methods;
- (ii) a 2-hour written examination in year 1, assessing competence in research methods;
- (iii) a 3-hour written examination in year 2, assessing the theory and application of clinical psychological methods at an advanced level;
- (iv) a 3-hour written examination in year 2, assessing competence in statistics.

4.3 A candidate failing any examination in the first or second year will be required to sit and pass an equivalent examination in August or September of the same year.

4.4 Clinical competence will be monitored throughout the clinical placements and will be assessed by examiners at the end of each 6-month placement period.

4.5 If a candidate fails to satisfy the requirements of a clinical placement, an oral examination will be conducted by at least two examiners, one of whom will be external to the University. The examination will cover clinical work undertaken during the placement and will be designed to test the candidate's ability to integrate theory, research and clinical practice at a level appropriate to their year of training. The possible outcomes of the oral examination are:

- i. Assessed placement period passed
- ii. Assessed placement period passed but with stipulated requirements for the demonstration of specific competencies in subsequent placements
- iii. Assessed placement period failed

4.6 Candidates must pass six placement periods in order to pass the Programme. If a placement period is failed, candidates will normally be permitted to undertake an additional placement period (though this will be at the discretion of the Examination Board). A candidate will be deemed to have failed the Programme if s/he fails more than one placement. Candidates will only be allowed to undertake one additional placement period during training.

4.7 The three case studies will demonstrate a knowledge of psychological theory and its application to clinical work. The service-related research report will demonstrate an ability to conduct applied research in clinical service settings. Two case studies, or one case study and the service-related research report, will be submitted in year 1. The service-related research report (or case study, if the service-related research report was submitted in year 1) will be submitted in year 2. The final case study will be submitted in year 3. A candidate who fails any piece of work (case study or service-related research) will be required to demonstrate the relevant competencies by submitting a new, equivalent piece of work. If the resubmission fails to satisfy the requirements, the candidate will not be permitted to continue on the course. Details on the timing of the resubmission will be announced by the course tutors.

4.8 The thesis will make a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject and will afford evidence of originality shown by the discovery of new facts and/or the exercise of independent critical power. It will be examined by an oral examination, which will be conducted by at least two examiners, one of whom will be external to the University. The examination will be designed to test the thesis against the criteria stated above. The possible outcomes of the oral examination are:

- (i) Pass
- (ii) Pass conditional on minor corrections (one month)
- (iii) Referred for stipulated revisions (three months)
- (iv) Referred for major revisions (one year); a further oral examination, following resubmission, may be held at the discretion of the examiners
- (v) Fail: no resubmission permitted

4.9 The award of the degree will be dependent on a satisfactory defence of the thesis in the oral examination as well as successful completion of all the other elements of the course as detailed above.

4.10 All elements of the course must be completed within four calendar years. In exceptional circumstances, this may be extended at the discretion of the examiners.

4.11 Where a student's behaviour or actions gives rise to concerns about their Fitness to Practise they will be subject to the UCL School of Life and Medical Sciences procedures for the assessment of Fitness to Practise in a Professional Capacity.

5. Dates of Assessments and Oral Examinations

5.1 Written examinations qualifying a candidate for submission of the thesis will take place in the third term in year 1, and in the third term of year 2. Dates will be announced annually by the course tutors. Assessment of clinical competence, including an oral examination when necessary, will take place at the end of each 6-month placement period. The three clinical reports and the service-related research report will be submitted as detailed in paragraph 4.7 above; dates will be announced annually by the course tutors.

5.2 The thesis will be submitted in June of the third year of study and will be examined by the end of September. Dates for the submission and examination of the thesis will be announced annually by the course administrators. Final copies, including minor amendments to the thesis specified by the examiners, must be submitted in the period defined by the examiners, at which point the course can be passed and HCPC registration arranged.

5.3 In the third term of the third year of the course of study, a candidate may defer submission of his/her thesis submission. In this case, examination of the thesis will be negotiated ad hoc to take place within three months of submission, subject to finding suitable willing examiners.

THE ROLE OF THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS

The Board of Examiners receives information about each trainee's progress on the Course, and ratifies decisions about whether each item of coursework is passed or failed. It considers the appropriate actions to take when progress is not satisfactory, and interprets the regulations in order to reach decisions about trainee's progression on the Course (for example, considering the impact of extenuating circumstances on trainee's performance).

Composition

The Board of Examiners comprises Course staff (who act as internal examiners) and External Examiners (who are appointed by the Course, and approved by the University as individuals whose experience and qualifications are appropriate to this role). Because of the size of the Course there are a large number of External Examiners. Their role is to moderate standards (in other words, to ensure that standards at UCL are commensurate with standards on other courses). They do this by seeing representative samples of trainees' coursework, and/or by participating in viva examinations (both of the thesis and clinical placements).

Frequency of meetings

The Board meets several times a year in order that it can deal with specific diets of examination or assessments in a timely manner. The full Board meets once a year (in September); at other times a sub-Board meeting is held.

All the work required for each academic year should be submitted and available for consideration by the September meeting of the Board of Examiners.

Role of the Board in relation to passing and failing

Candidates will be referred to the Board if:

- a) they receive a mark of 'Fail' on a case report or the service-related research report, or
- b) two instances in the same academic year of a case report receiving major revisions, or
- c) they receive a mark of 'Fail' in the research component of their dissertation, or
- d) their performance in any of the unseen papers in the examination is marked as a fail, or their performance is a bare or a low pass, or
- e) if their supervisor indicates that there is a substantial risk that a placement will not be passed at any point in the placement, or
- f) if their supervisor refers them to the Board at the end of placement
- g) if there are reports of major breaches of professional standards on placement or elsewhere and/or concerns about fitness to practise

The Board will consider each trainee's case and decide what training requirements may be necessary to ensure that the candidate has met the minimum criteria for practice as a clinical psychologist.

Once a candidate is referred to the Board of Examiners on clinical or academic grounds, entry to the succeeding year, or completion of the course in the final year, will be at the discretion of the Board of Examiners. This may depend upon further assessment by means of viva, additional coursework, and/or examination.

All the specified academic and placement requirements for each year must be completed satisfactorily before entry to and registration for the succeeding year is permitted, or (in the final year) a qualification can be awarded.

Notification of results to students

The Board reports the recommended results to the Examinations Section of the Registrar's Division after the relevant meeting. Formal notification is sent from the Registry to each student.

Extenuating Circumstances

Extenuating Circumstances (ECs) are defined by UCL as “events which are sudden, unexpected, significantly disruptive and beyond your control and which may affect your performance at summative assessment”. Common examples include illness, bereavement, or some practical impediment on placement that delays producing a clinical report. The [UCL webpages on ECs](#) contain detailed further information on this.

Trainees can submit EC claims to request mitigation. Usually this involves asking for an extended deadline on an assessment or, occasionally, the deferral of an exam.

For all examinations and clinical reports (including the Service-Related Project), EC requests need to be submitted via Portico. A guide to using Portico to submit claims is available [here](#).

For other pieces of work (e.g. project proposals, thesis hand-in, or work related to the BABCP pathway), mitigation requests are handled internally.

If trainees know in advance that significant personal circumstances might seriously impact on their ability to sit an exam, it is essential they discuss this with their course tutor prior to submitting an EC claim. If extenuating circumstances took effect suddenly and unpredictably, trainees should contact the course as soon as possible and arrange to meet with their course tutor to discuss a formal EC procedure after the exam.

Complaints

Section 30 of this handbook gives details of the procedures for complaints across all domains of the training.