

*Applied Behavior Analysis*



University of South Florida  
Master of Science in  
Applied Behavior Analysis

Student Handbook



Revised August 2024

**The USF Master of Science Program in  
Applied Behavior Analysis**



**Spring 2: (7)**

ABA in Complex Community Environments (3)

Practicum Seminar (2)

Thesis (2)

**Summer 2: (3)**

Thesis (2)

Practicum Seminar (1)

**Required Courses**

APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS BASIC PRINCIPLES (3 credits)

OBSERVATIONAL METHODS/FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT (3 credits)

SINGLE CASE EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN (3 credits)

BEHAVIOR THEORY (3 credits)

ABA IN COMPLEX COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTS (3 credits)

ETHICS IN APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS (3 credit)

SUPERVISION AND TRAINING IN ABA (3 CREDITS)

BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (3 credits)

EXPERIMENTAL ANALYSIS OF BEHAVIOR 1 (3 credits)

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH IN ABA (2 credits)

MHS 6940 PRACTICUM SEMINAR (8 credits) - S

## **Concentrated Supervised Fieldwork and Practicum Seminar**

The USF Applied Behavior Analysis Program follows the experience guidelines of the Behavior Analysis Certification Board ([www.BACB.com](http://www.BACB.com)), which require 1,

you better able to work with them. What is implied here is that students must engage in positive and constructive interactions with others. Furthermore, students must refrain from engaging in negative, critical, and demeaning talk about others (gossip).

Assertiveness. If a student has a concern with the actions of another student, coworker, or faculty member, the student should address the concern with that person as soon as possible. Often, problems with others arise because of misunderstandings. The only way problems or concerns can be resolved is by talking with the individual(s) involved.

Punctuality. Students are expected to show up on time for classes, meetings, fieldwork, and any other scheduled activities. Showing up on time means leaving on time (and anticipating traffic). It is also important to call the person with whom you have a commitment or meeting if you will be late for some unexpected reason.

Responsibility. Students are expected to complete assignments on time and in an accurate fashion, whether related to class, research, or practicum. It is clear and to seek assistance when necessary. In addition, students should attempt to be proactive with regards to communication and request help or information in a timely fashion.

Proper attire. As professionals in practicum settings, you should dress in behavior analysis more generally, will be determined not just by how well you do your work but by how you present yourself as well.

## Student Advising and Major Professor Assignment

During the first semester of coursework, the student will identify three potential major professors and rank them (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>), a thesis topic, a major professor, and a committee chair, will be assigned to them by the end of the first semester in the program.

## Thesis Requirement

The thesis requirement will involve the execution of a research project and the writing of a thesis manuscript. The purpose of the thesis is to enhance student abilities to:

- 1) Conceptualize a research question that is socially significant and important to the further development of applied behavior analysis; and
- 2) Apply sound research strategies in answering one of this question.

The thesis will consist of a) conceptualizing an original research project, writing a thesis proposal and orally defending the proposed research in a thesis proposal meeting and b) implementing the proposed research, writing the thesis manuscript,

and orally defending the completed thesis in the final defense meeting. The study must involve the collection of empirical data that are analyzed quantitatively to answer an important question relevant to the practice of applied behavior analysis. It is expected that the study will involve the manipulation of environmental variables to determine their functional relation to behavior of social importance.

All three in advance of data collection. A thesis proposal includes an introduction section (that includes the research question with appropriate reference to the supporting literature), a method section, a brief results section describing expected results with a graph of hypothetical data, and appendices showing all data sheets or other supporting materials needed to conduct the study (e.g., social validity questionnaire, task analysis of the target behavior). Prior to starting data collection, the student must also complete all IRB documentation and training requirements and obtain IRB approval. The thesis will consist of the conceptualization and defense of a written proposal, implementation of the research, and final thesis manuscript. The final according to the guidelines of the Graduate School. The thesis document and process must meet all Graduate School timelines and format (<http://www.grad.usf.edu/policies.php>).

consistent with behavior analytic standards. Prior to formulating the proposal and conducting the research, the major professor will ensure that the student has acquired the skills necessary for using the proposed measurement, intervention and research design strategies.

### Thesis Committee

(the thesis committee chair) along with a minimum of two other faculty members with doctoral degrees in applied behavior analysis or other discipline relevant to the thesis research. The committee chair must be a doctoral level faculty member in the ABA program. The other committee members may be ABA faculty members, faculty from other academic departments at USF or other universities, or doctoral level behavior analysts from community agencies.

A more detailed description of the process of conducting the thesis and the timeline in which thesis activities should occur is provided below.

### Thesis Activities and Timeline

#### 1) Chose a thesis topic (done by end of first fall semester)

##### How do you choose a topic?

- a) Read research articles.
- b) Think about what you are interested in.

- c) Think about what sites are available to you.
- d)







- b) It must be written according to Graduate School formatting requirements (these requirements are somewhat different from APA format).
- c) You should provide your advisor with a first draft of the thesis manuscript (or sections of the manuscript) after you have put your very best effort into writing the manuscript (you should edit your own work a number of times before giving a draft to your advisor). It is your responsibility to ensure your thesis manuscript is cogent, well laid out, and written in APA or Graduate School format. To ensure the quality of the writing, your advisor will edit your draft and ask for changes. This process will continue a number of times until the thesis manuscript is acceptable.

**12) Defend your thesis before your committee (summer**

- ii) Take these suggestions seriously, make the changes and let your committee members know how you made the changes.
- 13) Submit the completed thesis to the Office of Graduate Studies**
- a) Look at the Office of Graduate Studies website for the deadline.
  - b) You must include the plagiarism check verification
  - c) The manuscript must be in the proper format.
  - d) The manuscript must include all changes requested by your committee.
  - e) You cannot graduate until you receive final approval from the Office of Graduate Studies.
- 14) Complete IRB project completion paperwork**  
The IRB requires a project completion report. It is your responsibility to complete this report as the last duty on your thesis project.
- 15) Work with your advisor to prepare your thesis manuscript for submission to a journal**  
If your advisor deems the thesis to be publishable, begin working on a publication version of the paper

## **Summary – Thesis Timeline**

### **Fall semester of first year**

Decide on thesis topic and advisor

### **Spring semester of first year**

Write literature review

Start thesis proposal

### **Summer of first year**

Finish thesis proposal

Thesis proposal defense meeting

Complete and submit IRB materials

### **Fall of second year**

Start conducting thesis research project

### **Spring of second year**

Finish conducting thesis research project

Start writing thesis manuscript

### **Summer of second year**

Apply for graduation

Participate in the ETD Boot Camp provided by the Office of Graduate Studies

Participate in the final thesis defense meeting

Submit the final thesis manuscript to Office of Graduate Studies

Complete IRB paperwork

### **\*\* Other important issues \*\***

#### **Register for the proper number of thesis credits:**

Register for the thesis course with your advisor listed as instructor. Two thesis credits are required each semester starting in the summer of your first year:

## **Timeline for Graduation in the ABA Program**

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