

# **Departmental Graduate Handbook**

**Department of Kinesiology  
Mississippi State University**

**2016-2017**

**A supplement to the  
MSU Graduate Catalog**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Department of Kinesiology Graduate Handbook contains policies and procedures pertinent to graduate study in the Department of Kinesiology. Students and faculty should be aware that this publication is a supplement to the information contained in the MSU Graduate Catalog. All students and faculty should be aware of the university's policies and procedures outlined in the MSU Graduate Catalog, which is available online: <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/>

**The primary responsibility for being knowledgeable of and adhering to university and departmental policies, regulations, deadlines, and degree requirements rests with the student.**

## **SECTION 1: GRADUATE PROGRAM AREAS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF KINESIOLOGY**

### **Master of Science Degree Concentrations**

The Department of Kinesiology offers three master's degree concentrations: exercise physiology, sport administration, and sport pedagogy. The concentration in **exercise physiology** prepares students for careers in fitness and allied health care professions. The concentration in **sport administration** prepares students for careers in the sport industry, including positions with professional, collegiate, and recreational sport organizations. The concentration in **sport pedagogy** prepares students for leadership roles as coaches, physical educators, and K-12 athletic directors. These concentrations also prepare students for advanced study at the doctoral level.

### **Doctor of Philosophy Degree Concentrations**

The Department of Kinesiology offers two doctoral degree concentrations: exercise science and sport studies. The focus of the **exercise science** concentration is the scientific study of how biological systems function during physical activity, exercise, and sport, emphasizing applications to both clinical and healthy populations. The **sport studies** concentration involves studying sport from an interdisciplinary perspective, encompassing such specializations as sport management, sport pedagogy, sport sociology, and sporty philosophy, among others.

## SECTION 2: STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE DEPARTMENT

### Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Kinesiology is to prepare aspiring professionals and emerging scholars, conduct and disseminate research, and provide service in the areas of physical activity, exercise, and sport.

### Organization

The Department is an administrative and programmatic unit within the College of Education at Mississippi State University. The Department is composed of two divisions: Exercise Science and Sport Studies. Together, these divisions house three master's degree concentrations and two doctoral degree concentrations:

- Exercise Physiology (M.S.) – Division of Exercise Science
- Sport Administration (M.S.) – Division of Sport Studies
- Sport Pedagogy (M.S.) – Division of Sport Studies
- Exercise Science (Ph.D.) – Division of Exercise Science
- Sport Studies (Ph.D.) – Division of Sport Studies

### Governance

- The **graduate faculty** of the Department administer the graduate programs within the Department. Appointment to the graduate faculty is administered by the Dean of the Graduate School. The necessary request forms for appointment to the graduate faculty can be found on the MSU Office of the Graduate School website (<http://grad.msstate.edu/forms/>).
- The **Departmental Graduate Committee** consists of a coordinator and four additional graduate faculty members.
- The **Graduate Coordinator** shall be appointed by the **Department Head** for an unspecified term of service.
- The term of service for graduate committee members shall be 3 years.
  - Should a graduate committee member depart the University or resign from the committee, the Department Head or the Graduate Coordinator shall appoint an interim member to complete the term of the vacated seat.

### Kinesiology Graduate Coordinator

The Chairperson of the Departmental Graduate Committee performs the following tasks:

1. Chairs the Department of Kinesiology Graduate Committee and graduate faculty meetings;
2. Maintains graduate student files with the assistance of the Academic Records Assistant;
3. Schedules and conducts at least two graduate faculty meetings per academic year (usually fall & spring semesters);

4. Conducts the daily business of the Department of Kinesiology graduate programs under the auspices of the Graduate Committee according to the Graduate Handbook of the Department of Kinesiology and the Graduate Catalog;
5. Conducts indoctrination sessions about policies and procedures related to the graduate degree programs for new faculty and students;
6. Acts as liaison between the Graduate Committee of the Department, the Executive Council of the Department of Kinesiology, and the Graduate School.

### **Departmental Graduate Committee**

The Departmental Graduate Committee is responsible for the conduct and administration of the Department's graduate concentrations. The committee formulates policies and procedures relevant to the Department's graduate programs within the guidelines established by the Graduate School and the graduate faculty of the Department of Kinesiology. In addition, the Department's Graduate Committee is responsible for the following:

- Maintaining records and monitoring matriculation of each graduate student through graduation insuring compliance with established policies and procedures;
- Assisting in recruitment of graduate students to graduate concentrations;
- Reviewing new course proposals;
- Evaluating old and new areas of specializations;
- Evaluating and monitoring seminar course offerings;
- Assisting graduate faculty to maintain credentials appropriate for their graduate appointment and involvement in the graduate program.

## **SECTION 3: ADMISSIONS PROCESS**

### **Admission to Doctoral Degree Programs**

Prior to formally applying to the doctoral program, students should familiarize themselves with the research interests of graduate faculty members in the Department of Kinesiology and identify a faculty member whose research agenda aligns with their interests. A prospective applicant should then contact that faculty member to discuss his/her “fit” with the faculty member’s research interests. If possible, prospective applicants are encouraged to visit the MSU campus. When an informal understanding is reached regarding the student’s suitability to enter the doctoral program under the guidance of the faculty member, the student may then formally apply to the Graduate School. This does not guarantee a student admission to the doctoral program, but it is a necessary step prior to the formal application.

The following items are required in applying to doctoral degree programs in the Department of Kinesiology:

1. A completed MSU Graduate School application form
2. Official transcripts from all institutions attended since high school; students must have completed a master’s degree prior to being admitted to the doctoral program.
3. Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test scores
4. Three professional letters of recommendation; at least two letters should be from university professors from whom the student has taken courses or worked with in a research capacity.
5. A written statement of purpose, which should clearly explain the applicant’s research interests and highlight how these interests align with faculty members in the department, particularly the faculty member who the applicant wishes to serve as his/her advisor.
6. An academic writing sample (e.g., a published research article, thesis, or other academic paper)
7. A curriculum vitae
8. TOEFL or IELTS scores (only required for international applicants whose native language is not English; refer to the MSU Graduate Catalog)

The admissions process is competitive. Applicants should be aware that faculty members only advise a small number of graduate students at a time, and more individuals apply to the program than the program can accept. Competitive applicants will generally have a GPA of 3.5 or better in their graduate coursework as well as scores around the 50th percentile on the verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, and analytical writing portions of the GRE exam. Because of the competitive nature of admissions, it is recommended that individuals apply as far in advance of a deadline as possible.

Application deadlines for graduate study at Mississippi State University are as follows:

<b>Applying for</b>	<b>Domestic Deadline</b>	<b>International Deadline</b>
Fall Semester	July 1	May 1
Spring Semester	November 1	October 1
1st Summer Term	April 1	March 1
2nd Summer Term	May 1	March 1

An international student applying for admission must score a minimum of 550 PBT (213 CBT or 79 iBT) on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or a minimum of 6.5 on the International English Language Testing Systems (IELTS) in addition to meeting all other admission criteria.

### **Admission to Master’s Degree Programs**

The following items are required in applying to master’s degree programs in the Department of Kinesiology:

1. A completed MSU Graduate School application form
2. Official transcripts from all institutions attended since high school
3. Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test scores
4. Three professional letters of recommendation; at least two individuals providing letters should be in a position to specifically comment about the applicant’s academic ability (e.g., former professors)
5. A written statement of purpose, which should highlight the applicant’s qualifications, abilities, and academic/professional background; the statement should reflect a strong sense of career direction relevant to the program the applicant is seeking to enter.
6. A resume/curriculum vitae

The admissions process is competitive. Positions within the programs are limited, and more individuals may apply than are able to be accepted. Competitive applicants will usually have a GPA of 3.0 or better in their final 60 undergraduate hours as well as scores of 145 or greater on the verbal and quantitative reasoning sections and 3.5 or greater on the analytical writing portion of the GRE exam. An applicant's statement of purpose, letters of recommendation, and professional experience are also considered in the admissions process.

Application deadlines for graduate study at Mississippi State University are as follows:

<b>Applying for</b>	<b>Domestic Deadline</b>	<b>International Deadline</b>
Fall Semester	July 1	May 1
Spring Semester	November 1	October 1
1st Summer Term	April 1	March 1
2nd Summer Term	May 1	March 1



Because of the competitive nature of admissions, it is recommended that individuals apply as far in advance of a deadline as possible. Students who wait until near the application deadline to apply may find there are no remaining spaces available in the program.

An international student applying for admission must score a minimum of 550 PBT (213 CBT or 79 iBT) on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or a minimum of 6.5 on the International English Language Testing Systems (IELTS) in addition to meeting all other admission criteria.

### **Changing Concentrations After Being Admitted to the Department**

If a student wishes to change concentrations after having been admitted to a master's degree program in the Department of Kinesiology, the student must write a new statement of purpose that provides a detailed rationale about why he/she wishes to change concentrations. The student must also obtain a letter of support from his/her current advisor and a prospective advisor in the new concentration the student wishes to enter. The new statement of purpose and letters of support should be submitted to the graduate coordinator via email. The student's request will be reviewed by the graduate committee at its next regularly-scheduled meeting.

### **Unclassified Admission**

Students may obtain unclassified admission status following the procedures outlined in the MSU Graduate Catalog (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/admissions-information/admission-procedure/status/>). Individuals admitted with unclassified status are able to take graduate courses, but they must obtain permission to receive an override from the instructor of any course they wish to take. Students should realize that faculty members are under no obligation to provide overrides to unclassified students. Further, students should realize that there is no guarantee that they will be officially admitted to a graduate program after spending one or more semesters as an unclassified student.

## **SECTION 4: SELECTING AN ADVISOR AND PROGRAM OF STUDY**

### **Selecting an Advisor and Committee – Master’s Students**

After being admitted to a master’s degree program, each student must contact a graduate faculty member to ask if he/she is willing to serve as his/her advisor (the advisor is also referred to as the “Major Professor”). Ideally, the student should select an advisor whose research aligns closely with the student’s interests. Students should meet with their advisors regularly each semester to ensure that they are adequately progressing toward degree completion. A student may change his/her advisor if there is agreement between all parties involved (i.e., the student, the former advisor, and the new advisor). In some cases, students may have “Co-Major Professors”.

Master’s degree students must have at least three committee members (i.e., a “Major Professor” plus two additional committee members, or two “Co-Major Professors” and one additional committee member). The student’s advisor (“Major Professor”) and committee members will be noted on the “Committee Request” form, which can be printed off from the Graduate School website (<http://grad.msstate.edu/forms/>). It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that the form is completed correctly and that all necessary signatures are obtained.

### **Selecting an Advisor and Committee – Doctoral Students**

As noted in the admissions process for doctoral degree programs (see section 3 in this handbook), students must obtain approval to enter the doctoral program under the direction of a particular faculty member prior to being formally admitted. Once a student is officially admitted to a doctoral program, this faculty member will serve as the student’s advisor (the advisor is also referred to as the “Major Professor”). In some cases, students may have “Co-Major Professors”.

Doctoral degree students must have at least four total committee members (i.e., a “Major Professor” plus three additional committee members, or two “Co-Major Professors” and two additional committee members). One of the committee members must be from outside the Department of Kinesiology. The student’s advisor (“Major Professor”) and committee members will be noted on the “Committee Request” form, which can be accessed on the Graduate School website (<http://grad.msstate.edu/forms/>). It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that the committee request form is completed correctly and that all necessary signatures are obtained.

### **Program of Study**

Each concentration at the master’s and doctoral level provides a curricular outline for a program of study. The student has the opportunity, in conjunction with his/her advisor and committee, to make substitutions in the program of study. The student’s program of study will be noted on the “Graduate Program of Study” form, which can be accessed on the Graduate School website (<http://grad.msstate.edu/forms/>). Any substitutions to the standard curriculum must be noted in a “Change to Graduate Program of Study” form and accompanied by a letter from the student’s

advisor, signed by all committee members and the departmental graduate coordinator (the letter should be addressed to the Dean of the Graduate School). It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all forms are completed correctly and that all necessary signatures are obtained.

## **SECTION 5: ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

Students should be familiar with the academic performance guidelines outlined in the **MSU Graduate Catalog** (see the section entitled “Graduate School General Degree Completion Requirements” in the table of contents and, specifically, the subsection entitled “Grades and Degree Completion”), which is available online: <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/>. Students who do not meet the requirements for degree completion outlined in the Graduate Catalog will be dismissed from the graduate program. Students who are dismissed may appeal their dismissal by following the appeal procedures outlined in the Graduate Catalog (see the subsection entitled “Academic Probation, Dismissal, and Appeal”).

## **SECTION 6: DEGREE COMPLETION – MASTER’S DEGREES**

Each of the master’s degree concentrations in the Department of Kinesiology offer three concluding options: (1) a thesis, (2) a directed individual study, **or** (3) an internship. Each student should pursue a concluding option (in consultation with his/her advisor and committee members) that coincides with their academic/professional goals and interests. Students who pursue the directed individual study option or the internship option must also successfully complete comprehensive exams prior to graduation.

### **Thesis Option**

A thesis is an original research project of substantial complexity and quality completed by the student as the culmination of his/her master’s program of study. Students should select a research topic and conduct the study in close consultation with their advisor and committee members. The steps involved in completing a thesis include: (1) obtaining approval from the advisor and committee members for a research proposal, (2) obtaining any necessary approval from the university Institutional Review Board, (3) collecting data, (4) analyzing data, (5) writing the thesis, (6) public presentation of the thesis and defense before the supervisory committee, and (7) final submission of the approved thesis to the MSU Library. At least one week prior to the defense, the student must provide the complete thesis manuscript to all committee members. The student must also complete the “declaration of examination/defense” form at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense date (see <http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/>). The student’s committee members will evaluate the content and style of the completed thesis document. Two negative votes from committee members will constitute failure for a student on the thesis defense (a student may still “pass” the thesis defense with one negative vote). A student who fails to defend the thesis successfully on his/her initial attempt can schedule another defense after a period of four months has elapsed from the date of the original defense. A second failure to defend the thesis will result in the student being dismissed from the graduate program. After the student has successfully passed the thesis defense, the student’s advisor should submit the “report of examination results” form to the departmental graduate coordinator (see <http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/>). The student must also submit a final draft of the thesis manuscript to the MSU Library after it has been approved by the committee members (see the following link concerning the university’s thesis formatting guidelines: <http://guides.library.msstate.edu/td>).

### **Directed Individual Study (DIS) Option**

Like the thesis option, a DIS will also involve a student working with his/her advisor and committee members to conduct a research study. However, while still requiring a substantial level of rigor and quality, the DIS may be somewhat smaller in scale than a thesis. The steps involved in completing a DIS include: (1) obtaining approval from the advisor and committee members for a research topic prior to registering for DIS credits, (2) obtaining any necessary

approval from the university Institutional Review Board, (3) collecting data, (4) analyzing data, and (5) writing/presenting the research results to the satisfaction of the student's advisor and committee members. Because the DIS may only constitute three graduate credit hours in the student's program of study (as opposed to six for the thesis), students who pursue the DIS option must complete three additional graduate credit hours (these hours must be approved by the student's advisor and committee). In addition, students who pursue the DIS option must successfully complete comprehensive exams prior to graduation.

### **Internship Option**

The internship option will involve a student gaining practical work experience in an area related to his/her professional goals and interests. The internship will require a minimum of 300 hours of documented work over a minimum of 10 weeks, completed in a position in which the student has not worked previously (i.e., if the student is currently working as a graduate assistant (GA), the internship must be done in an area that is different than the student's GA position). The specific duties to be performed during the internship must be approved by the student's advisor and committee members. The student will register for three credit hours of KI 8710 while completing his/her internship. For students in the exercise physiology and sport pedagogy concentrations, the KI 8710 hours will be supervised by the student's advisor. For students in the sport administration concentration, the KI 8710 hours will be supervised by the faculty member that is supervising SS 4396 undergraduate interns in that particular semester.

### **Comprehensive Examination**

Students who pursue the DIS option or thesis option must successfully pass written comprehensive exams prior to graduation. Students will select five courses from their program of study from which to receive comprehensive exams. The comprehensive exam session, which takes place once per semester (including once during the summer), begins at 8:30 AM and concludes at 5:00 PM. In order to successfully pass comprehensive exams, students must receive a passing evaluation on their responses from the exams in all five courses. As noted in the MSU Graduate Catalog, students must be within six hours of graduation or in their final semester of coursework (absent DIS or internship hours) to participate in the comprehensive exams. The application form to take comprehensive exams can be found on the Kinesiology departmental website (<http://kinesiology.msstate.edu/comps/>). Students who fail the comprehensive examination must wait at least four months before retaking the examination. If a student fails the comprehensive examination twice, he/she will be dismissed from the graduate program.

## **SECTION 7: DEGREE COMPLETION – DOCTORAL DEGREES**

In addition to satisfactory completion of all coursework in the program of study, doctoral students must also satisfy the following requirements.

### **Academic Symposia Attendance**

Throughout their tenure in the Department of Kinesiology, doctoral students are required to attend and actively participate in departmental symposia. Academic symposia are designed to provide graduate students a vehicle whereby they can participate in the life of the department. These symposia: (1) provide graduate students an avenue in which to present their research, (2) provide a forum for graduate students to critique the research of others, (3) provide a forum for graduate students to interact with professionals from outside the university, and (4) enrich the academic culture of the department. Active participation may include: (1) evaluation of research presentations, (2) participating in symposia organization, and (3) presenting research proposals and the results of completed research. Students who do not attend these meetings in person or who do not participate fully will receive written notification so that attendance and participation can be documented in the review file. **Failure to meet these requirements may result in probation and possible expulsion from the program.** Students may request an excused absence in writing from the chair of the department's Academic Culture Committee and their faculty adviser for previously planned activities. Students must provide ample documentation to justify their absence at least four weeks in advance of the anticipated planned absence. Permission must be granted by both parties. Unplanned absences due to unavoidable circumstances such as medical and family emergencies will be reviewed on an individual basis by the Chair of the Academic Culture Committee and the faculty adviser. Students who receive an excused absence will be responsible for completing a written make-up assignment in advance of the absence to receive credit. Disputes will be reconciled by the student's supervisory committee. The decision of the supervisory committee will be final.

### **Directed Individual Study Requirement**

As noted in the PhD curriculum, students must complete at least three credit hours of directed individual study (DIS), the outcome of which should be a manuscript suitable for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. These DIS hours must be supervised by the student's advisor, who will judge the manuscript's suitability for submission. The student must have submitted the manuscript, as the first author, for review to a peer-reviewed journal prior to taking his/her comprehensive exams. Proof of this submission should be sent to the graduate coordinator. In order to improve their prospects of gaining employment, PhD students are encouraged to be active researchers and submit multiple manuscripts during their time in the doctoral program.

## **Preliminary/Comprehensive Examination**

Prior to beginning the comprehensive examination, a student should discuss his/her potential dissertation topic with all supervisory committee members. In addition to testing the student's knowledge of his/her program of study, an important purpose of the comprehensive examination is to assess the student's readiness to begin the dissertation. The comprehensive examination will consist of both a written and oral component. A student who fails either the written or oral comprehensive examination must wait at least four months before retaking the examination. If a student fails the comprehensive examination twice, he/she will be dismissed from the graduate program.

### *Written Examination*

After a student has successfully fulfilled the DIS requirement outlined above, he/she may schedule the written comprehensive examination with his/her supervisory committee. The student must be in his/her final semester of coursework (excluding dissertation) or within six hours of completing coursework (excluding dissertation) in order to take the comprehensive examination. The written examination may consist of either (1) a "closed-book" examination in which the student sits down in a computer lab to write answers to a question(s) in a set period of time, (2) an "open-book" examination in which the student reviews literature and writes an answer to a question(s) over the course of multiple days, or (3) some combination of "closed-book" and "open-book" examinations. The specific structure of a given student's written examinations will be determined by the student's supervisory committee. It is expected that each member of the supervisory committee will provide at least one question(s) to the student. Ideally, the comprehensive examination should serve an important role in helping prepare the student for the dissertation process.

### *Oral Examination*

After passing the written examination, the student will schedule an oral examination with his/her committee members. The oral examination provides the student an opportunity to address weaknesses from the written examination and orally communicate knowledge pertinent to his/her program of study. At this point, the student should be close to having a coherent outline of his/her dissertation proposal. Thus, the oral examination also provides the committee members an opportunity to ask background questions pertinent to the student's potential dissertation topic.

## **Dissertation Proposal**

After passing the written and oral examinations, the student will schedule a dissertation proposal meeting with his/her committee members. At least one week prior to the proposal meeting, the student must provide a written draft of his/her proposal to all committee members. The written proposal should typically include chapter 1 (introduction), chapter 2 (review of literature), and chapter 3 (method) of the dissertation. The dissertation proposal meeting provides the opportunity for the student to orally present the proposal to the committee and for the committee



to discuss the proposal with the student. Ideally, the proposal meeting should result in a consensus between the committee members and student regarding the direction of the student's dissertation.

### **Admission to Candidacy**

After the student has the dissertation proposal approved by his/her supervisory committee, the student and committee members should complete the "admission to candidacy" form available on the Graduate School website: <http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/>

### **Dissertation Defense**

Students must complete a public presentation of their dissertation research and a defense before their supervisory committee. At least one week prior to the defense, the student must provide the complete dissertation manuscript to all committee members. The student must also complete the "declaration of examination/defense" form at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense date (see <http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/>). The student's committee members will evaluate the content and style of the completed dissertation document. Two negative votes from committee members will constitute failure for a student on the dissertation defense (a student may still "pass" the dissertation defense with one negative vote). A student who fails to defend the dissertation successfully on his/her initial attempt can schedule another defense after a period of four months has elapsed from the date of the original defense. A second failure to defend the dissertation will result in the student being dismissed from the graduate program. After the student has successfully passed the dissertation defense, the student's advisor should submit the "report of examination results" form to the departmental graduate coordinator (see <http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/>). The student must also submit a final draft of the dissertation manuscript to the MSU Library after it has been approved by the committee members (see the following link concerning the university's dissertation formatting guidelines: <http://guides.library.msstate.edu/td>).