

PSYCHOLOGY, DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PH.D.) WITH A CONCENTRATION IN DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Program goal

The Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology offered by VCU prepares students for basic or applied research and includes two specialty areas: developmental psychology and social psychology. The concentration in developmental psychology prioritizes research and applied skills in human development, with an emphasis on development in context. Students conduct research and do applied work in university laboratories as well as various community, school and other applied settings. They focus on a variety of ages and stages (particularly children and adolescents) and populations (e.g., ethnic-racial minorities, marginalized youth, parents, persons with special health care needs). VCU trains students for careers in academic teaching and research settings and for professional work in applied settings. Applied developmental psychologists work in a variety of settings and programs, for example community intervention agents, schools, family service providers, nonprofit agencies, state and national government entities, health care settings, and research organizations. Developmental psychologists do not offer counseling or clinical therapy services.

Student learning outcomes

Program core learning outcomes

1. Students will achieve competency in their knowledge of psychology.
2. Students will demonstrate skills required to utilize and generate theories, conduct scientifically sound research, communicate ideas and information to others, and evaluate conclusions statistically.
3. Students will adhere to the highest standards of ethics in their research, teaching and applied work.

Developmental psychology concentration-specific learning outcome

1. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the models and theories of developmental psychology.

VCU Graduate Bulletin, VCU Graduate School and general academic policies and regulations for all graduate students in all graduate programs

The VCU Graduate Bulletin website documents the official admission and academic rules and regulations that govern graduate education for all graduate programs at the university. These policies are established by the graduate faculty of the university through their elected representatives to the University Graduate Council.

It is the responsibility of all graduate students, both on- and off-campus, to be familiar with the VCU Graduate Bulletin as well as the Graduate School website (<http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/>) and academic regulations in individual school and department publications and on program websites. However, in all cases, the official policies and procedures of the University Graduate Council, as published on the VCU

Graduate Bulletin and Graduate School websites, take precedence over individual program policies and guidelines.

Visit the **academic regulations section for additional information on academic regulations for graduate students.** (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/>)

Degree candidacy requirements

A graduate student admitted to a program or concentration requiring a final research project, work of art, thesis or dissertation, must qualify for continuing master's or doctoral status according to the degree candidacy requirements of the student's graduate program. Admission to degree candidacy, if applicable, is a formal statement by the graduate student's faculty regarding the student's academic achievements and the student's readiness to proceed to the final research phase of the degree program.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following degree candidacy policy as published in the VCU Graduate Bulletin for complete information and instructions.

Visit the **academic regulations section for additional information on degree candidacy requirements.** (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/candidacy/>)

Graduation requirements

As graduate students approach the end of their academic programs and the final semester of matriculation, they must make formal application to graduate. No degrees will be conferred until the application to graduate has been finalized.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following graduation requirements as published in the Graduate Bulletin for a complete list of instructions and a graduation checklist.

Visit the **academic regulations section for additional information on graduation requirements.** (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/>)

Apply online today. (<https://www.vcu.edu/admissions/apply/graduate/>)

Admission requirements

Degree:	Semester(s) of entry:	Deadline dates:	Test requirements:
Ph.D.	Fall	Dec 1	

In addition to the general admission requirements of the VCU Graduate School (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/admission-graduate-study/admission-requirements/>), the following requirements represent the minimum acceptable standards for admission. **Note: The GRE is not required as part of application for admission.**

1. Applicants must have graduated with a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university, but not necessarily with a major in psychology.
2. Applicants must present 18 semester hours of undergraduate course work in psychology. This is the minimal, but not optimal, number of hours for an applicant to be considered for admission. Included must be each of the following courses: general psychology, statistics and experimental psychology. Exceptionally well-qualified applicants with less than a major in psychology, or applicants whose undergraduate work is considered outdated by the admissions committee, may be

advised to complete some additional undergraduate courses at the beginning of their graduate study program.

3. Applicants must present an undergraduate record indicating superior academic potential.
4. Three letters of recommendation from previous instructors are required.
5. A personal interview may be required at the discretion of the department.

The number of students who can be admitted is limited by the facilities and staff available. All applicants will be notified of the decision made. The screening process may begin as early as Jan. 1. First offers of admission are made by April 1. By June 1, after other offers to alternates have been made and final acceptances by students have been received, admissions may be closed.

Applicants to the psychology doctoral program should specify to which of the three divisions they are applying (i.e., biopsychology, developmental or social).

Transfer credit hours for graduate work at other institutions will be evaluated after the completion of nine semester hours in the department.

Degree requirements

In addition to general VCU Graduate School graduation requirements (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/>), students are required to complete course work in core and elective courses and to conduct significant research. All work toward the Ph.D. degree must be completed within eight years of the first enrollment.

1. Credit hour requirements: Students in the psychology Ph.D. program are required to earn a minimum of 72 graduate-level credit hours beyond the baccalaureate. At least one-half of the credit hours presented for graduation must be at the 600 level or higher.
2. Grade requirement: Receipt of a grade of C or lower in two courses, or grades of C or lower in more than six credit hours of psychology courses, constitutes automatic dismissal of a student from the program.
3. Master's-level candidacy and requirements: All students in the Department of Psychology are required to complete a department core curriculum (17 credit hours) or its equivalent for students entering with a master's degree. Students who receive a grade of C or lower in one of the department core courses must either (a) satisfactorily complete a re-examination of the material covered in the course within one semester following the receipt of the grade (this re-examination is to be arranged and evaluated by the course instructor) or (b) repeat the course for credit the next time it is offered and receive a grade of B or better. Regardless of which of these approaches is chosen, the students will be given only one opportunity to demonstrate that they have mastered the course material. Students who either fail the re-examination or repeat the course and receive a grade of C or lower will have failed the comprehensive examination and will be dismissed from the program. Additional courses and training experiences will be determined in consultation with and subject to the approval of the student's faculty adviser and graduate program committee. All students are required to complete a master's thesis and to defend it successfully in an oral examination. The successful proposal of the thesis will elevate the student to master's degree candidacy status. Ideally, the thesis should be publishable as a piece of research and make a contribution to the field of psychology. Students who have previously completed

a master's thesis in psychology at another university may have the thesis requirement waived if the thesis is accepted by their graduate program committee. The residence requirement for the master's degree is 18 hours, nine in each of two consecutive semesters. Completion of the degree usually requires four semesters. At least six credit hours in PSYC 798 must be completed, and no more than six can be counted toward the M.S. degree.

4. Doctoral candidacy and requirements: Students are obligated to request, in writing from their program committees, continuation of study beyond the master's degree and approval of their doctoral plan of study. Application from a student for continuation beyond the master's level will be evaluated by the appropriate program committee after completion of all requirements for the master's degree. The program committee reviews the student's request and approves or disapproves the request. The student must pass a written preliminary examination to become a doctoral candidate. Students are required to complete this requirement prior to defense of their dissertations and prior to leaving on internship for students in the clinical and counseling psychology programs. With the consent of the program committee, doctoral students may design a minor consisting of courses in departments other than psychology or courses in an area of psychology other than the major. Both the clinical and counseling psychology programs require completion of applied practica and a one-year predoctoral internship approved by the program committee. Research practica are required by all programs. Practicum credit hours will vary depending on the program. Internship will be one-half credit hour per semester. A dissertation requiring the planning, completion and oral defense of an original research project is an integral part of the doctoral program. At least 12 credit hours in PSYC 898 must be completed, and no more than 12 can be counted toward the Ph.D. degree. Completion of the entire program usually requires four to six years (including the internship year for students in the clinical and counseling programs). Candidates must complete all requirements for the Ph.D. degree within an eight-year period from the date of admission to the graduate program unless permission is granted for an extension. In some cases, specific programs and divisions may have requirements in addition to those stated here.

A more detailed description of the requirements for each of the graduate programs is included in the Department of Psychology's Graduate Student Handbook, which is provided to each incoming graduate student. Visit the website for more information: psychology.vcu.edu (<http://www.psychology.vcu.edu/>).

Curriculum requirements

Course	Title	Hours
Department core courses		
PSYC 619	Learning and Cognition ¹	3
PSYC 629	Biological Basis of Behavior ¹	3
PSYC 673	Diversity Dialogues ¹	2
PSYC 680	Statistics in Psychological Research I ¹	3
PSYC 681	Statistics in Psychological Research II ¹	3
PSYC 684	Research Methods in Psychology ¹	3
Responsible conduct of research course ¹		
Select one of the following:		1-2
OVRP 601	Scientific Integrity	
OVRP 602	Responsible Scientific Conduct	
OVRP 603	Responsible Conduct of Research	

PSYC 675	Ethical Principles of Psychology	
Developmental psychology concentration core courses		
PSYC 603	Developmental Processes ¹	3
PSYC 613	Cognitive Development ¹	3
PSYC 643	Principles of Psychological Measurement ¹	2
PSYC 671	Readings and Research (at least two credit hours required for M.S.) ¹	5
or PSYC 690	Research Practicum	
PSYC 605	Social Development ¹	3
Cultural/individual diversity course		
Select three credit hours from: ²		3
PSYC 679	Culture, Ethnicity and Health	
PSYC 691	Special Topics (African-American family)	
Applied courses		
Select six credit hours from the list below or other applied-related course approved by adviser (three of the six credits must be completed to meet the requirements for the master's degree). ¹		6
PSYC 631	Evaluation Research: Psychological Perspectives	
PSYC 655	Community Interventions: Development, Implementation and Evaluation	
PSYC 700	Grant Writing	
PSYC 795	Practicum in the Teaching of College Psychology	
SBHD 636	Community-based Participatory Research	
SBHD 639	Intervention Development and Implementation	
Methodology/statistics course		
Select three credit hours from the list below or other relevant methodology/statistics-related course approved by adviser.		3
EDUS 711	Qualitative Methods and Analysis	
NURS 772	Qualitative Research	
PSYC 682	Advanced Multivariate Methods in Psychology	
PSYC 683	Multilevel Modeling	
SBHD 638	Applications in Qualitative Research Methods	
Recommended electives		
Select from:		8
GRTY 601	Biological and Physiological Aging	
GRTY 602	Psychology of Aging	
GRTY 605	Social Science Research Methods Applied to Gerontology	
GRTY 606	Aging and Human Values	
HGEN 501	Introduction to Human Genetics	
HGEN 502	Advanced Human Genetics	
HGEN 620	Principles of Human Behavioral Genetics	
IDDS 600	Teamwork in Serving Persons With Developmental Disabilities	

IDDS 691	Special Topics in Developmental Disabilities	
IDDS 692	Directed Study in Developmental Disabilities	
PSYC 606	Development in Middle Childhood	
PSYC 614	Development in Infancy and Early Childhood	
PSYC 615	Aging and Mental Disorders	
PSYC 616	Psychopathology	
PSYC 628	Psychology of Adolescence	
PSYC 630	Social Psychology	
PSYC 635/ GRTY 627	Psychology of Health and Health Care in the Elderly	
PSYC 640	Parenting	
PSYC/GRTY 641	Survey of Psychological Assessment and Treatment of the Older Adult	
PSYC 644	Individual Tests of Intelligence	
PSYC 645	Assessment of Personality	
PSYC 650	Advanced Child Psychopathology	
PSYC 655	Community Interventions: Development, Implementation and Evaluation	
PSYC 659	Seminar in Consultation Psychology	
PSYC 660	Health Psychology	
PSYC 671	Readings and Research	
PSYC 679	Culture, Ethnicity and Health	
PSYC 690	Research Practicum	
PSYC 691	Special Topics (child health, African-American family, school mental health)	
RHAB 625	Research and Program Evaluation	
SEDP 705	Seminar on Disability Policy	
Thesis/dissertation		
PSYC 798	M.S. Thesis ¹	6
PSYC 898	Doctoral Dissertation	12
Total Hours		72

1

Required course for M.S. degree (40 credit hours minimum)

2

Other portfolio, diversity-related or independent study courses demonstrating in-depth knowledge about diversity in human development areas may be approved by the developmental psychology faculty.

The minimum total of graduate credit hours required for this degree is 72.

Note: Students specializing in lifespan development and gerontology must take the following set of gerontology courses in addition to other developmental and core requirements. These courses will result in a Certificate in Aging Studies from the Department of Gerontology.

Course	Title	Hours
GRTY 601	Biological and Physiological Aging	3
GRTY/PSYC 602	Psychology of Aging	3
GRTY 605	Social Science Research Methods Applied to Gerontology	3

GRTY 692	Independent Studies	2
Six additional hours of gerontology electives, chosen with adviser		6

Contact

Terri Sullivan, Ph.D.
 Professor and graduate program co-director
 tnsulliv@vcu.edu (tnsulliv@vcu.edu)
 (804) 828-9304

Robin S. Everhart, Ph.D.
 Professor and graduate program co-director
 reverhart@vcu.edu
 (804) 828-7249

Additional contact

Marcia Winter, Ph.D.
 Associate professor and director, developmental psychology concentration
 mawinter@vcu.edu
 (804) 828-2053

Program website: <https://psychology.vcu.edu/graduate/phd-in-psychology-developmentalsocial/developmental-psychology-concentration/>