

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

Social psychology concentration-specific learning outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the models and theories of social 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/). (<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/). (<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/). (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/>)

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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.

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.

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

The GRE is not required for admission into the social psychology program.

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.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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) (<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		1-2
OVPR 601	Scientific Integrity	
OVPR 602	Responsible Scientific Conduct	
OVPR 603	Responsible Conduct of Research	
PSYC 675	Ethical Principles of Psychology	

Social psychology concentration core courses

PSYC 610	Attitude Theory and Research ¹	3
PSYC 630	Social Psychology ¹	3
PSYC 634	Social Cognition ¹	3
PSYC 671	Readings and Research ¹	1-3
PSYC 690	Research Practicum	1-3
One advanced, three-credit course in statistics (e.g., structural equation modeling, meta-analysis), with approval of the program director		3

Social seminars

Select nine credit hours from the following or choose other social psychology-relevant courses approved by adviser: 9

PSYC 631	Evaluation Research: Psychological Perspectives
PSYC 688	The Self and Identity
PSYC 691	Special Topics ((interpersonal processes, social influence, social and developmental practicum, positive psychology)

Recommended concentration electives

Select eight to nine credit hours from the following: 8-9

HGEN 620	Principles of Human Behavioral Genetics
PSYC/GRTY 602	Psychology of Aging
PSYC 603	Developmental Processes
PSYC 604	Social Psychology of Business and Industry
PSYC 605	Social Development
PSYC 613	Cognitive Development
PSYC 618	Seminar in Personality
PSYC 620	Design and Analysis of Psychological Research
PSYC 622	Physiological Correlates of Emotion
PSYC 631	Evaluation Research: Psychological Perspectives
PSYC 633	Group Dynamics
PSYC 659	Seminar in Consultation Psychology
PSYC 660	Health Psychology
PSYC 668	Interpersonal Psychotherapy: Social Psychological Analysis
PSYC 671	Readings and Research
PSYC 678	African American Children and Families
PSYC 679	Culture, Ethnicity and Health
PSYC 682	Advanced Multivariate Methods in Psychology
PSYC 683	Multilevel Modeling
PSYC 688	The Self and Identity
PSYC 690	Research Practicum
PSYC 691	Special Topics
PSYC 700	Grant Writing
PSYC/MGMT 702	Causal Analysis for Organizational Studies
PSYC 795	Practicum in the Teaching of College Psychology

SBHD 610	Behavioral Measurement
STAT 643	Applied Linear Regression
STAT 744	Regression II

Thesis/dissertation

PSYC 798	M.S. Thesis ¹	1-6
PSYC 898	Doctoral Dissertation	1-12

Total Hours 74-77

¹

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

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

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