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 three specialty areas: biopsychology, developmental psychology and social psychology. The concentration in developmental psychology trains students for work in either college or university academic departments or applied settings. Applied developmentalists work in a variety of settings and programs (violence prevention, community intervention, schools, family service agencies, nonprofit agencies, health care settings, disability agencies) with a variety of human populations (infants and young children, school-age children, adolescents, at-risk youth, incarcerated youth and adults, parents, older adults, persons with disabilities); they do not offer counseling/therapy services.

The Center for Psychological Services and Development, a campus-based community service agency operated by the department, provides training opportunities for graduate students in all departmental programs, including practicum and research training for graduate students in the clinical psychology program. A wide variety of other on- and off-campus practicum placements also are available.

The department maintains laboratory facilities for research in the areas of behavioral assessment, behavioral medicine, developmental, learning, behavioral pharmacology, psychophysiology, psychotherapy process, social perception, social influence and group dynamics. Opportunities for field research also are available in a variety of settings.

Student learning outcomes
a. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the models and theories of developmental psychology.
b. Students will use scientifically sound methodologies in their research.
c. Students will adhere to the highest standards of ethics in their research, teaching and applied practice.

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. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/)

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. (http://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. (http://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 (http://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.

a. Applicants must have graduated with a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university, but not necessarily with a major in psychology.

b. 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.

c. Applicants must present an undergraduate record indicating superior academic potential.

d. Three letters of recommendation from previous instructors are required.

e. 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 (http://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.

a. 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.

b. 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.

c. Master's-level candidacy and requirements: All students in the Department of Psychology are required to complete a department core curriculum (13-15 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 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.

d. 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 619</td>
<td>Learning and Cognition</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 629</td>
<td>Biological Basis of Behavior</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 673</td>
<td>Topics in Diversity I</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 674</td>
<td>Topics in Diversity II</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSYC 680</td>
<td>Statistics in Psychological Research I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 681</td>
<td>Statistics in Psychological Research II</td>
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Select one of the following: 1-2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OVPR 601</td>
<td>Scientific Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVPR 602</td>
<td>Responsible Scientific Conduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVPR 603</td>
<td>Responsible Conduct of Research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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### Developmental psychology concentration core courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Semester Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 603</td>
<td>Developmental Processes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 605</td>
<td>Social Development</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 613</td>
<td>Cognitive Development</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 636</td>
<td>Research Methods in Developmental Psychology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or PSYC 684</td>
<td>Research Methods in Psychology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 643</td>
<td>Principles of Psychological Measurement</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 671</td>
<td>Readings and Research (at least two credit hours</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or PSYC 690</td>
<td>Research Practicum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cultural/individual diversity course

Select three credit hours from:

- 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).

- 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.

- 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:

- 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 Interdisciplinary Studies in Developmental Disabilities: 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
- PSYC 898 Doctoral Dissertation

**Total Hours**

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
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<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GRTY 601</td>
<td>Biological and Physiological Aging</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRTY/PSYC 602</td>
<td>Psychology of Aging</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRTY 605</td>
<td>Social Science Research Methods Applied to Gerontology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRTY 692</td>
<td>Independent Studies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Six additional hours of gerontology electives, chosen with adviser</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Program website:** psychology.vcu.edu/developmental (http://www.psychology.vcu.edu/developmental/)