

# DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

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psychology.vcu.edu (<http://www.psychology.vcu.edu>)

In addition to the Bachelor of Science in Psychology, the Department of Psychology offers instruction in clinical, counseling, health and general psychology leading to the Doctor of Philosophy degree. Students in all doctoral degree programs are educated first as psychologists and then helped to develop competence in a more specialized area relevant to their scholarly and professional objectives. In addition, special training and experience in college teaching is available.

## Admission requirements for doctoral programs

In addition to the general requirements for admission to the graduate programs in the Graduate School (in the Graduate study (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/admission-graduate-study/>) section of this bulletin), the following requirements represent the minimum acceptable standards for admission:

- Graduation with a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university, but not necessarily with a major in psychology
- 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well-qualified applicants with less than a major in psychology, or applicants whose undergraduate work is considered outdated by the admissions committee, may be advised to complete some additional undergraduate courses at the beginning of their graduate study program.)
- An undergraduate record indicating superior academic potential
- Three letters of recommendation from previous instructors
- 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. See the admission requirements summary tables to view admission deadlines for each of the Ph.D. programs: clinical psychology, counseling psychology, general psychology (biopsychology, developmental psychology, social psychology) and health psychology.

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

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

## Degree requirements for doctoral programs

The following requirements are in addition to those described for the graduate programs in the Graduate School and the College of Humanities and Sciences section of this bulletin.

All students are required to complete a core curriculum of 15 credits (or its equivalent for students entering with a master's degree).

Students who receive grades of B or better in each of the department core courses are considered to have fulfilled the university requirements of a master's level comprehensive examination and will then officially be considered candidates for the Master of Science degree. Students who receive grades of C or lower in two or more department core courses will have failed the comprehensive examination and will be dismissed automatically from the program. 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.

Receipt of a grade of C or lower in two courses, or grades of C or lower in more than six credits of psychology courses, constitutes automatic dismissal of a student from the program.

All students are required to complete a master's thesis and to defend it successfully in an oral examination. 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 semester credits in PSYC 798 must be completed, and no more than six can be counted toward the M.S. degree.

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 will vary depending on the program. Internship will be one-half credit 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 semester credits 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>).

Students who complete the requirements for either of these concentrations will receive a Doctor of Philosophy in Clinical Psychology.

- Clinical Psychology, Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) with a concentration in behavioral medicine (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/college-humanities-sciences/psychology/clinical-psychology-phd-concentration-behavioral-medicine/>)
- Clinical Psychology, Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) with a concentration in clinical child (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/college-humanities-sciences/psychology/clinical-psychology-phd-concentration-clinical-child/>)

Students who complete the requirements for this degree will receive a Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling Psychology.

- Counseling Psychology, Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/college-humanities-sciences/psychology/counseling-psychology-phd/>)

Students who complete the requirements for this degree will receive a Doctor of Philosophy in Health Psychology.

- Health Psychology, Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/college-humanities-sciences/psychology/health-psychology-phd/>)

Students who complete the requirements for either of these concentrations will receive a Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology.

- Psychology, Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) with a concentration in developmental psychology (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/college-humanities-sciences/psychology/psychology-phd-concentration-developmental-psychology/>)
- Psychology, Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) with a concentration in social psychology (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/college-humanities-sciences/psychology/psychology-phd-concentration-social-psychology/>)