

***Student Info from the APA Education Directorate*****Frequently Asked Questions about Education and Training in Psychology**

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**What is the difference between a Psy.D. and a Ph.D. degree?**

Both Psy.D. and the Ph.D. degree programs lead to the doctoral degree in psychology, which can open up many career opportunities. At least four years of study are usually required to obtain a doctorate. If you wish to provide psychological services, another year for the internship and at least one additional year of supervised practice are necessary.

Individuals interested in careers as professional clinical, counseling, or school psychologists may consider the 'Professional School' doctoral program, some of which offer the Psy.D. rather than the more traditional Ph.D. or Ed.D. Professional schools place greater emphasis on training students for professional practice, whereas traditional programs place a greater emphasis on developing the psychologist as both a researcher and a practitioner. Psy.D. programs tend to feature more structured course sequences as well as extensive practical work.

The APA accredits programs that provide doctoral training in the professional areas of psychology. Graduation from any of these programs is considered appropriate preparation for the professional practice of psychology (assuming, of

course, the subsequent completion of state licensing requirements).

## **What is the difference between a degree in Clinical and Counseling Psychology (or other specialty areas)?**

Clinical: Clinical psychologists assess and treat mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders. These range from short-term crises, such as difficulties resulting from adolescent rebellion to more severe, chronic conditions such as schizophrenia. Some clinical psychologists treat specific problems exclusively, such as phobias or clinical depression. Others focus on specific populations: youngsters, ethnic minority groups, gays and lesbians, and the elderly, for instance.

Counseling: Counseling psychologists help people to accommodate to change or to make changes in their lifestyle. For example, they provide vocational and career assessment and guidance or help someone come to terms with the death of a loved one. They help students adjust to college, and people to stop smoking or overeating. They also consult with physicians on physical problems that have underlying psychological causes.

Developmental psychologists study the psychological development of the human being that takes place throughout life.

Educational psychologists concentrate on how effective teaching and learning takes place.

Engineering psychologists conduct research on how people work best with machines.

Forensic psychologists apply psychological principles to legal issues.

Health psychologists are interested in how biological, psychological, and social factors affect health and illness.

Industrial/organizational psychologists apply psychological principles and research methods to the work place in the interest of improving productivity and the quality of work life.

Neuropsychologists explore the relationships between brain systems and behavior.

Quantitative and measurement psychologists focus on methods and techniques for acquiring and analyzing psychological data.

Rehabilitation psychologists work with stroke and accident victims, people with mental retardation, and those with developmental disabilities caused by such conditions as cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and autism.

School psychologists work directly with public and private schools.

Social psychologists study how a person's mental life and behavior is shaped by interactions with other people.

Sports psychologists help athletes refine their focus on competitive goals, become more motivated, and learn to deal with the anxiety and fear of failure that often accompany competition.

## **What can an individual do with a master's degree vs. a doctoral degree?**

**Doctoral graduates:** As might be expected, the highest paid and greatest range of jobs in psychology are available to doctoral graduates. Although the number of doctoral graduates has at least doubled over the past 12 years, the demand continues to meet the supply. Furthermore, unemployment and underemployment rates for doctoral psychologists are slightly below the average for other scientists and engineers. Few drop out of the field.

The greatest expansion of career opportunities for doctoral psychologists in the last decade has been in the subfields of clinical, counseling, school, health, industrial, and educational psychology. As a consequence, proportionally fewer new doctorates have headed into faculty positions as compared with the past.

**Master's graduates:** The number of psychology students who pursue a terminal master's degree has increased sixfold since 1960. Competition for positions in psychology-related jobs is keen; nevertheless, approximately one-third of those with a master's degree in psychology find such work. Many handle research and data collection and analysis in universities, government, and private companies. Others find jobs in health, industry, and education, the primary work settings for psychology professionals with master's degrees. With growing recognition of the role of the psychologist in the community, more jobs for psychologists with master's degrees may also become available in community mental health centers.

Psychologists with master's degrees often work under the direction of a doctoral psychologist, especially in clinical, counseling, school, and testing and measurement psychology.

Some jobs in industry, for example, in organizational development and survey research, are held by both doctoral- and master's-level graduates. But industry and government jobs in compensation, training, data analysis, and general personnel issues are often filled by professionals with master's degrees in psychology.

## **What are the (state) requirements for licensing/credentialling?**

All 50 states and the District of Columbia have laws that require psychologists to be licensed or certified by a state board in order to engage in the independent and unsupervised practice of psychology.

Before enrolling in a graduate program, any student planning to seek licensure after graduate school should contact the State Examining Board for Psychology in the state where he/she intends to practice. Prior to taking the licensing exam in psychology, the licensing board reviews students' educational backgrounds carefully; having a doctoral degree does not make a person automatically eligible to take the exam. More information regarding licensure and a list of state licensing boards can be obtained by contacting the APA.

**What is the best graduate or undergraduate program for a certain area? Where can I get a list of the 'top 10' best psychology programs? Who/what ranks psychology programs?**

The APA does not rank schools or programs. However, the APA publishes the book *Graduate Study in Psychology* which lists over 550 graduate psychology programs throughout the United States and Canada. The book includes information on programs and degrees offered, admission requirements, degree requirements, financial aid, tuition, deadlines, internships, and much more! To order a copy of *Graduate Study in Psychology* (cost is \$19.95 + \$3.50 shipping and handling), please contact the APA Order Department at 1-800-374-2721. A list of APA accredited doctoral programs in clinical, counseling, and school psychology can be found on the Accreditation page or can be obtained by contacting the APA Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation at 202-336-5979. After reviewing these lists, it would be most helpful to contact the programs directly for more detailed information.