

## PsyD Program

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Choosing a Program and License(s) to Pursue

##### **1. Is the PsyD APA accredited?**

Currently, the PsyD program is not accredited. Since we are a new program, we are unable to obtain APA accreditation. However, we will be applying for APA accreditation as soon as possible, which will be in two years. After two years of the program, we will submit a self-study and apply for a site visit. If a site visit is granted we will host the APA site visitors in Year 3 of the program, and if our program is deemed acceptable, we will be awarded “accredited, on contingency.” Two years later we will be awarded (if approved) full accreditation status.

##### **2. Where can I find the instructions and materials needed to apply to the program?**

Application instructions and materials are linked to the PsyD program website.

##### ***When can I apply?***

The admissions process happens once a year, with a deadline of December 15<sup>th</sup>.

##### ***What are my chances of being admitted?***

Since this is the first year of the program, we do not have much data regarding our admission rates and accepted student information. However, we expect that gaining admission to the program will be consistently competitive. Last year, we admitted about 20% of applicants, after interviewing approximately 40% of those who apply. Over the next several years, we expect that these percentages will get lower, since we have limited time to advertise and prepare for 2016 – 2017 applications. Due to program capacity limitations, we are only able to accept those who present the very strongest applications and interviews, meaning that some qualified applicants will not be accepted into the program. With regard to our accepted students, the average GRE was 308 and an average GPA of 3.82.

For the academic year 2017 – 2018, we will be accepting up to 10 students.

##### **3. What are characteristics of students who are admitted and succeed in the program?**

Overall, students need a Master’s in Clinical or School Psychology or a related field. It is expected that admitted students will have an undergraduate GPA and a combined

Graduate Record Exam (GRE) score around or above the average of our first class. They typically have very strong letters of recommendation, usually from at least one or more professors or supervisors in a school and/or mental health-relevant setting. They often have research experience, with resulting products (posters, papers, chapters). Further, some experience volunteering or working in a setting relevant to applied mental health services (e.g., crisis line, domestic violence shelter, psychotherapy clinical trial) is helpful. Overall, they tend to have a record that demonstrates productivity, reliability, and a passion for the field. Also, successful students are compassionate, intellectually curious, and have strong interpersonal skills.

**4. What can one do to improve chances of being admitted?**

The admissions committee evaluates all application materials, in particular, the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), prior academic records, letters of recommendations, and products from and experiences with research, as well as prior experiences in settings relevant to clinical work. Thus, if an applicant's GPA or GRE is lower than those indicated above (typical characteristics of students who are accepted), then it is important that other parts of his or her application indicate an extraordinary strength in some other area of performance (e.g., research experience, prior academic performance, clinical experience, and letters of recommendation).

We encourage individuals to meet with their mentors (those they hope to provide letters of recommendation) to discuss ways to strengthen their applications.

**5. Can I meet with you about my application?**

The program receives a large number of applications and is not designed to meet with individuals regarding specifics about their application. Thus, we are unable to provide individualized information either before or after the application process. It is impossible for us to admit every candidate likely to be a successful graduate student. We offer admission to those whose applications are comparatively strongest during each admission period, and some students with outstanding potential may not be offered admission.

**6. If I am not admitted the first time, should I re-apply?**

We recommend that applicants who are not offered admission during a given admissions period consider the competitiveness of their application by comparing their performance to the qualifications outlined by the program. Applicants with scores substantially lower than those typically admitted are unlikely to gain admission if they re-apply unless these scores have changed in the interim (e.g., they subsequently score higher on the GRE). We would encourage applicants to discuss their application and their approach to interviewing with a trusted mentor (for example, one of those asked to write a letter of recommendation). Sometimes applicants can improve their applications by significantly increasing relevant experiences (e.g., volunteer work in a clinical setting) or by demonstrating excellence in some other area (e.g., research

productivity, exceptional performance in a course taught by clinical psychology faculty) prior to re-applying.

### Employment and Financial Assistance during Program

**1. What financial aid, scholarships, assistantships, and stipends (if any) are available for the clinical psychology program?**

The program offers an assistantship of \$17000 per year, which will require the student to work as a teaching assistant or research assistant. Outside of the assistantship, the university offers some – but typically modest—opportunities for financial aid (see <http://prtl.uhcl.edu/financial-aid>).

**2. Are students able to work while enrolled in the program?**

Given the assistantship responsibilities and the demands of the program, students typically are not allowed to work outside of the program. On a rare occasion, students can petition the DCT (Director of Clinical Training) to get permission to work outside the program, but the student will only be approved if this work does not interfere with his/her commitment to the program. It should also be noted that any outside work (if approved) will need to be outside of typical business hours (8-5), when most program courses are offered. It is currently not possible to navigate the program without completing courses and practica during typical business hours.

**3. Is it possible to be a part-time student in the program?**

This is a full-time program. All students are expected to be full-time students, including taking 12 hours each long-semester and working 20 hours per week for their assistantship.

### Progressing through the Program Curriculum

**1. How does student advising and mentoring work?**

All students are accepted under one research supervisor, who will be their academic advisor and mentor. Thus, when students apply they will be asked to list those faculty members who they would like to work under. Therefore, students should address how their interests align with each faculty member, who may have expertise in areas of research that overlap with their interests.

**2. May I complete program coursework online?**

No, the program's training experience is provided via in-class lectures, discussion, and learning of applied clinical skills. Students complete the program without taking online courses.

**3. Does the program require a thesis?**

The program does not require a formal thesis. However, admission to the program requires completion of a thesis or research project prior to or as part of the graduate program. Each thesis or project must be approved by the person's assigned research advisor. Students lacking completion of a thesis or formal research project upon admission will be required to complete a research project as part of required coursework.

**4. Does the program require a dissertation?**

Yes, the program requires a dissertation. Typically, the dissertation is proposed by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in the program, with the student working most of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year on the completion of the thesis.

**5. Does the program require a qualifying exam?**

Yes, the program requires a qualifying exam. This exam will cover the knowledge that most recent practice analyses have determined as foundational to the competent practice of psychology. This includes questions in approximately eight topics, including questions on the biological bases of behavior; the cognitive--affective bases of behavior; the social and cultural bases of behavior; growth and lifespan development; assessment and diagnosis of patients; the treatment, intervention, prevention and supervision of patients; research methods and statistics; and ethical, legal, and professional issues.

**Training Experiences while Completing the PsyD Program.**

**1. What kinds of external practica (internships) are available and how are they arranged?**

After completing a two-semester internal practicum at the UHCL Psychological Services Clinic, students complete a two-semester external practicum. Our program has established and maintains positive relationships with a broad array of practicum sites in the greater Houston area which provide students with many options for extending their clinical training. Sites include traditional outpatient mental health clinics, school districts, medical settings, and correctional settings.

**2. Are there opportunities for specialization in particular areas (e.g., substance abuse, OCD, eating disorders)?**

Our program provides generalist clinical training. Students wanting to set a foundation for specialization do so through the research and clinical experiences.