

# Psychology Doctoral Program Admissions

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What Master's and Undergraduate Level Students  
Need to Know

**Linh Nguyen Littleford, Kim Buxton, Meredith A. Bucher,  
Kao Lee Yang, and Stephanie Simon-Dack**





## *About Us*

- We are Co-Directors of 2-year Master's Programs at Ball State University:
  - Clinical Psychology MA
  - Cognitive & Social Processes MA
- Our programs' mission is **doctoral preparation**

## *Our graduate and undergraduate students often ask:*

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*Isn't it difficult to get  
admitted into a  
doctoral program?*

# *Because we are researchers, we went to the data:*

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Our answer: Yes, it is difficult to get admitted into a psychology doctoral program.

The average acceptance rate is: 7.5%

But...

acceptance rates differ by sub-discipline.

# Doctoral-Level Programs Acceptance Rates

Subfield	Acceptance Rate in 2013-2014
Clinical	12.0%
Clinical Psy.D.	26%* -50%**
Counseling	11.0%
Practice	
- School	29.0%
- Community	25.2%
- Applied Behavior	25.2%

Subfield	Acceptance Rate in 2013-2014
Research	
- Social	7.0%
- I/O	14.6%
- Developmental	14.1%
- Cognitive	10.9%
- Neuroscience	10.7%
- Experimental	12.7%

Michalski, Cope, & Fowler (2015)

\* University Psychology department, \*\* Free Standing PsyD. -Norcross, Ellis, & Sayette (2010)

***Our graduate and undergraduate students often ask:***

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*What are the benefits  
of going to a master's  
psychology program?*

# ***Data show reasons students might want to go to a master's program:***

1. **Higher acceptance rates** (51.2% for MA vs. 13.3% for doctorate, Michalski et al., 2015).
2. **Less time commitment** (2-year for MA vs.  $\geq$  5-year for doctorate, APA, 2014).
3. **Be more competitive for admission to doctoral programs** (Perlman & Dehart, 1985).

# *Master's programs might also help students who are:*

Unsure which sub-discipline matches career goals (e.g., counseling vs. clinical psychology, social vs. developmental psychology).

- Acquire more in-depth psychology-related content knowledge.
- Make informed decisions about career goals.

Unsure which professional activities match interests and potential (e.g., research vs. teaching vs. therapy).

- Gain research, psychotherapy, and teaching experience to gauge interest and competence.





## *Our graduate and undergraduate students often ask:*

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*Which will help me more with getting admitted into a doctoral program: clinical internship or research experience?*

*Will my thesis transfer to doctoral programs?*

*How does a master's program help me get admitted into a doctoral program?*

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***We could not find recent data to answer our students' questions.***

***So, along with 3 of our graduate students, we surveyed 221 psychology doctoral programs to answer:***

## *Study Questions*

1. What do psychology doctorate programs require and prefer in their master's level applicants?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a master's degree during and after doctoral programs' admission processes?
3. Do psychology subfields differ in how they evaluate master's level applicants to their doctoral programs?

# Results Summaries

(See “Tables” document for data)

# Credentials Required to APPLY

**REQUIRED BY  
> 90% OF PROGRAMS**

- Letters of recommendation
- Personal statements
- GRE scores
- Undergraduate GPA

**REQUIRED BY  
57%-68% OF PROGRAMS**

- Interview
- Curriculum vitae
- Student-Mentor research match

**REQUIRED BY  
25%-28% OF PROGRAMS**

- Research assistantship experience
- Graduate GPA

# Credentials Important to ADMISSION

# Very Important to All Programs

Personal statement

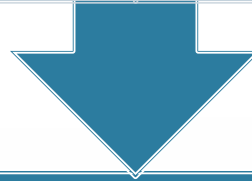
Letters of recommendation

Interview

Student-Mentor research match

GRE

Undergraduate GPA



## Subfield Differences

**Interviews** more important for Clinical Ph.D., Counseling Ph.D., & Psy.D. than Research subfields.

**Student-mentor research match** more important to Clinical Ph.D., Counseling Ph.D., Practice, and Research subfields than Psy.D. programs



# Moderately Important to All Programs

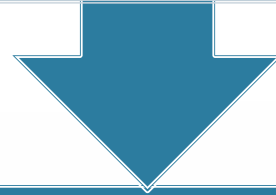
Graduate GPA

Curriculum  
vitae

Research  
assistantship  
experience

Independent  
research  
experience

Research  
publication



## Subfield Differences

**Research assistance experience** more important to Clinical Ph.D., Counseling Ph.D., Practice, and Research subfields than Psy.D. programs

# Master's Applicants

## During Admission

- MA/MS degree **more positive effect on admission** than BA/BS.
- Counseling Ph.D. **more likely to admit** MA/MS students than other subfields.

## After Admission

- Most research subfields, practice subfields, and clinical Ph.D. programs will **allow MA/MS thesis to transfer.**
- Most research subfields, practice subfields, clinical Ph.D., & counseling Ph.D. programs will **reduce time required in doctorate program.**

# *Our Recommendations*

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1. To be **eligible to apply** to more programs,
  - a. **must** have letters of recommendation, personal statements, GRE scores, and undergraduate GPAs.
  - b. gain **research experience** rather than clinical/counseling internship or teaching experience.

# *Our Recommendations*

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2. Review common requirements of specific subfields at least 1 year before applying.
  - a. Ph.D. bound - gain research experience
  - b. Psy.D. bound- gain work/life, clinical/counseling, and diversity experiences

## VERY IMPORTANT TO ADMISSION

- Letters of recommendation
- Personal statements
- GRE scores
- Undergraduate GPA

3. Seek opportunities to enhance these skills while in master's program

## MODERATELY IMPORTANT TO ADMISSION

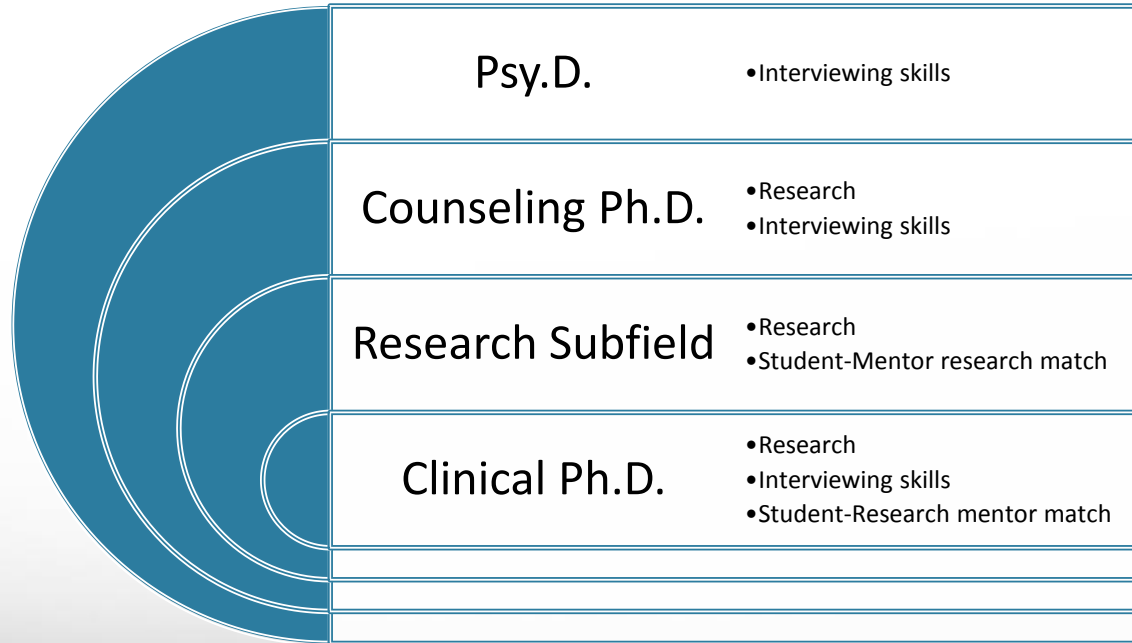
- Strong master's GPA
- Strong CV
- Independent research experience
- Publication

# *Recommendations*

## Enhance Skills if Valued by Subfield:

- Interview
- Student-Mentor research match
- Research assistance experience
- Diversity experience
- Conference presentation
- Work/Life experience
- Clinical/counseling experience
- Contact faculty before applying

# *Focus on These Skills When Applying*



**In light of these findings, we changed our MA programs' curricula.**



# *Clinical Psychology MA*



- Theoretical Foundations of Clinical Psychology

Added

- Research Methods 1
- **Research Methods 2**
- **Professional Development Colloquium**
- **Advanced Statistics**
- Psychopathology
- Psychophysiology
- Assessment
- Psychotherapy
- Cultural Diversity

# *Clinical Psychology MA*



- **Optional Concentrations**
  - Clinical/Counseling
  - Assessment
  - Cultural Diversity
- **Optional Internship**

Added

No  
longer  
required

# *Cognitive & Social Processes MA*



Added

- Foundations of cognitive psychology and social psychology and their intersection
  - Research Methods 1
  - **Research Methods 2**
  - **Professional Development Colloquium**
  - **Advanced Statistics**
  - Perception and Cognition
  - Memory Processes
  - Cultural Diversity
  - Psychophysiology
  - Social Psychology

# *Cognitive & Social Processes MA*



- Optional Certificate
  - Institutional Research
  - Statistical Analysis
  - Applied Behavior Analysis

# Best of Luck in Your Future Endeavors!

Questions about our Study or  
our MA Programs in Clinical Psychology or Cognitive and Social  
Processes?

email: [psyscgrad@bsu.edu](mailto:psyscgrad@bsu.edu)

[www.bsu.edu/psychology](http://www.bsu.edu/psychology)

[www.BallStatePsychScienceMA.US](http://www.BallStatePsychScienceMA.US)



B A L L S T A T E  
U N I V E R S I T Y