

Handbook for Undergraduate Psych Majors – Table of Contents

Welcome to the Psychology major!! This handbook was developed by the faculty of the Hofstra Psychology department to help you navigate your way through the Psychology requirements and to help you prepare for your future beyond Hofstra. There are two main sections. The first section, *Life at Hofstra*, describes a number of resources that you can take advantage of while you continue your education at Hofstra. The second section, *Life beyond Hofstra*, is designed to help you learn about (a) the many exciting career options available to Psychology students, (b) the type of graduate training you might need to land your ideal job, and (c) the ins and outs of applying to grad school. Throughout both sections of this handbook, we'll often direct you to two blogs that the Psych department maintains, the [Hofstra Psych Advising blog](#) and the [Psych Internships blog](#). We recommend that you visit both of these blogs regularly to ensure that you have up-to-date access to important announcements and reminders. The most recent version of this handbook is linked to the advising blog:

<http://hofstrapsychadvising.wordpress.com/>

Table of Contents

[Section I: Life at Hofstra](#)

Declaring Psychology as your major	3
Course requirements for the major	3
Some important reminders about the requirements... ..	3
Advisement	4
Psychology Faculty Advisor	4
University Advisement Dean.....	4
The Degree Audit	4
What to do with all those “electives” credits	5
Getting involved outside of the classroom	5
Become a research assistant (RA) for a full-time faculty member or graduate student	5
Do an honors thesis.....	5
Do an internship.....	5
Attend Psych Club meetings	6
Attend Neuroscience Club meetings.....	6
Attend conferences.....	6
Become a member of the Psi Chi National Honor Society in Psychology	7

Section II: Life Beyond Hofstra

Job options with a bachelor’s degree in Psychology.....	8
The importance of “hands-on” experiences	9
Picking the right courses	9
How to search for jobs	9
Job options with a graduate degree	9
Mental Health	10
MASTERS PROGRAMS (two years avg, full-time; part-time is an option).....	10
Ph.D. PROGRAMS (5-7 years, full-time)	11
Psy.D. PROGRAMS (5-6 years, full-time)	13
PYSCHIATRY (M.D., plus approx. 3-4 years of training after med school)	13
Industrial / Organizational Psychology.....	14
MASTERS PROGRAMS - I/O PSYCHOLOGY (2 years)	14
Ph.D. PROGRAMS – I/O PSYCHOLOGY (3-6 years)	14
Other Subfields in Psychology.....	15
Job Options	17
Admissions Requirements (typically, 4-6 years)	18
Salary.....	18
Tips for Applying to Graduate School	18
Books.....	18
Timeline for Applying	19
Apply broadly	20
APA Accreditation	20
Expense	21
What to do if you don’t get accepted	21
Does it look bad to take time off before applying to grad school?.....	21
Beyond this Handbook.....	21
Hofstra Psychology Faculty	22
Other useful Documents	22
Professional Organizations.....	22
References.....	22

Section I: Life at Hofstra

Declaring Psychology as your major

- If you haven't formally declared your major already, we recommend that you do so now. Once you're officially declared, you will receive regular emails from the Psych department with important reminders and announcements about upcoming deadlines and events as well as opportunities for research assistantships, internships, and much more.
- To declare the major, you'll first need to meet with a faculty member of the Psych department. At this meeting you will learn about the degree requirements and you will be appointed a faculty advisor. Visit the [Hofstra Psych Advising blog](#) to learn who you need to see to declare the major.

Course requirements for the major

To view the course requirements for the major, download an advising worksheet from the [Hofstra Psych Advising blog](#). **Note** – make sure you download the appropriate worksheet. For example, we currently have two worksheets for the B.A. degree (one for students who started at Hofstra prior to Fall 2013 and another for students who started Fall 2013 or later). A third worksheet will appear once we begin offering the B.S. degree. Visit the [Hofstra Psych Advising blog](#) for recommended courses for selected career paths.

Some important reminders about the requirements

- Pay attention to prerequisites. For a course to count toward a prerequisite, you must obtain a grade of C- or better. For example, prior to taking the second course in the research sequence (Research Methods and Design), you would need to have earned a C- or better in PSY 1 (Intro to Psychology) and PSY 40 (Statistics).
- The minimum requirements for the B.A. in Psychology add up to 33 credits of PSY courses. You can take more than 33 credits, but there is a maximum: Make sure you don't exceed 45 summed credits of courses with the PSY prefix.
- After you are matriculated at Hofstra, you cannot take courses at other institutions for Hofstra credit. There is an exception: Approved coursework from semester abroad programs can be used to satisfy your Hofstra requirements. You would need to meet with your Psych advisor to

obtain approval *prior to* going abroad. For more information about semester abroad programs click [here](#).

Advisement

After you declare the major, you will have TWO advisors, each of whom will serve an important role.

Psychology Faculty Advisor

You'll find out who this is when you declare the major. You can also find your advisor on the [Hofstra Psych Advising blog](#). See this person for:

- Questions about Psychology major requirements
- To confirm that you are on track to graduate on schedule
- Advice on course selections for the major
- Questions about graduate school and careers. To make the most out of this meeting, first read Section II of this handbook.

University Advisement Dean

This person's name will appear at the top of your degree audit. See this person for:

- To confirm that you are on track to graduate on schedule
- Questions about non-psychology requirements: Distribution, Foreign language, Writing Studies and Composition.
- Questions about transfer credits (for major courses & non-major courses). **Note** - If you transferred credits from somewhere else, "TR" should appear in your Degree Audit in the spot where a letter grade appears for Hofstra courses. If something other than "TR" appears, your first stop should be your advisement dean.

The Degree Audit

- We recommend that you confirm that your major appears on your degree about two weeks after you've declared the major.
- To help ensure that you are making good progress on your requirements (major and non-major requirements) from one semester to the next, run your degree audit twice a semester:
 - At the end of the semester, to ensure that grades have been assigned for all of your courses and that those courses appear in the correct categories.
 - When it's time to create your schedule for the upcoming semester, to remind yourself of the requirements you have yet to satisfy.
- To learn how to access the degree audit and how to interpret the degree audit, academic records offers some helpful [tutorials](#).

What to do with all those “electives” credits

- After accounting for all of your requirements (Major, ~ 33 credits; Distribution, ~ 33 credits; Writing Studies and Composition, ~ 6 credits; Foreign Language, ~ 9-12 credits), that leaves roughly 43 elective credits. That’s about 12 courses!
- This calculation illustrates that there is plenty of room to pick up a minor or two, or perhaps even a second major.
- Visit the [Hofstra Psych Advising blog](#) to learn about the **neuroscience minor** and the **cognitive science minor**, and to access links to information about dozens of other minors.
- A note to "Dual Majors": If you are a dual major, you will have THREE advisors (your university advisement dean, plus one faculty member from each of the major departments).

Getting involved outside of the classroom

To make the most out of your time here at Hofstra, you should take part in learning experiences outside of the classroom. Here are some ways you can do this:

Become a research assistant (RA) for a full-time faculty member or graduate student

- Your duties might include any number of the following activities: Prepping stimuli, running participants in experiments, doing a lit search, or coding data.
- To learn about these opportunities, visit the [Hofstra Psych Advising blog](#). If you have targeted a specific research area, contact a faculty member directly to see if they have room for an RA in their lab.
- Research assistantships are typically *volunteer* positions.

Do an honors thesis

- Eligible students (click [here](#) to view the requirements) may complete a senior honors thesis under the guidance of a faculty sponsor. An honors thesis provides an opportunity for students to conduct their own scientific research. To search for a faculty sponsor, view the Psych faculty research interests ([here](#)).
- An honors thesis typically takes two semesters to complete.
- Completion of an honors thesis would count as three credits toward the Specialty/Applied electives requirement for the major.
- If you do an honors thesis, consider presenting it at Hofstra’s [Undergraduate Research Day](#).

Do an internship

- An internship will help you learn more about a career area that you are interested in, get hands-on experience, and make professional connections that can be very useful when you're seeking employment after graduation. Also, completing an internship is a great resume-builder, whether you decide to enter the workforce right after graduation or apply to graduate school.

- Here's a list of agencies where students have interned in the recent past: Long Island Crisis Center, Pedersen-Krag Center, Family Translational Research Group (NYU), Nassau County Probation, NBC Universal, Northwestern Mutual, Project Hope, The Riverhead Foundation, Supreme Court of the State of NY, US Marshall's Service, Bideawee, Bio Behavioral Institute, Bloomingdales, Clinton Foundation, EMI Music Group, Human Development Company, YAI, Mental Health Assoc., Suffolk County, Nassau County DA's Office
- Visit our [Psych Internships blog](#) for information about how to search for an internship that's right for you.
- You might be able to earn course credit for doing an internship! For more details, visit our [internships website](#).

Attend Psych Club meetings

- The undergraduate Psychology Club is an organization for students run by students.
- The club meets Wednesdays during common hour and sponsors speakers who provide information on the numerous possible careers in psychology, how to get the necessary training for a career in psychology, and how to prepare for and apply to graduate programs in psychology.
- In recent years, the club has invited speakers on volunteer opportunities for students, suicide prevention, AIDS and drug counseling, anger management, rational emotive behavior therapy, psychoanalysis, social work, industrial/organizational psychology, school psychology, and forensic psychology.
- Visit <http://hofstrapsychclub.blogspot.com/> and like the Hofstra Psych Club on Facebook to stay informed about Psych Club activities.

Attend Neuroscience Club meetings

- Similar to the Psych Club, the Neuroscience Club is an organization for students run by students.
- The Neuroscience Club is geared toward students interested in the science and facts that go on with the most fascinating part of the body, the brain! Hear professional speakers from universities and hospitals and learn about opportunities to participate in some great philanthropic events.
- Like the Hofstra Neuroscience Club on Facebook to stay informed about its activities.

Attend conferences

- Attend conferences to hear presentations by some top researchers in the field, learn more about psychology, and meet psychology students and faculty from other colleges. If you're interested in going on to graduate school in psychology, it's a particularly useful experience.
- If you're working on an independent project or honors thesis, talk to your faculty sponsor about the possibility of presenting at a conference.

- Here is a list of some conferences that are particularly accessible to undergraduates (they take place annually, typically during the spring semester): The Long Island Psychology Conference, Eastern Psychological Association, Neuron (Quinnipiac University).
- The [Undergraduate Research Day](#) at Hofstra is a small-scale conference that takes place every semester.
- Stay tuned to the [Hofstra Psych Advising blog](#) for information about upcoming conferences and for details about how to submit a request to present your research.

Become a member of the Psi Chi National Honor Society in Psychology

- Psi Chi meets jointly with the Psych Club. Visit the Psych Club's blog (<http://hofstrapsychclub.blogspot.com/>) to learn about the requirements and how to apply for membership.

Section II: Life beyond Hofstra

It's never too early to start planning for life after college. We suggest you start exploring careers that match your interests now, so that you can tailor your future coursework and experiences toward the types of careers that are appealing to you. This section of the Handbook for Undergraduate Psych Majors will help you start the learning process. If you haven't done so already, read about the many "hands on" ways you can explore possible career directions, for example by getting involved in research or internships (visit [Section I of this handbook](#)).

Job options with a bachelor's degree in Psychology

Psychology majors graduate from Hofstra University with a broad base of knowledge and research skills that are attractive to many employers. According to the [2012 Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) of the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), if you end your studies in psychology with a bachelor's degree, a few careers to consider include:

- Public Relations
- Sales Representative
- Marketing Research
- Medical Research Assistant
- Probation/Parole Officer
- Child Care
- Health Services
- Social Services
- "Not-for-profit" Administrator
- Paralegal Researcher
- Advertising Agent
- Career Counselor

Places where recent Hofstra graduates of the Psychology Department have found jobs:

- Achieve Beyond
- ALC Precision
- Management positions at Bed Bath & Beyond and Target
- Developmental Disabilities Institute
- Teacher Child Care
- Hunter EMS
- Mental Health Association of Nassau County
- North Shore-LIU Health System
- SCO Family of Services
- Yale University School of Medicine

The importance of “hands-on” experiences

- If you are going to terminate your education with a bachelor’s degree, then it is a good idea to explore the types of jobs you want to pursue while completing your degree in psychology.
- This can be achieved through **summer jobs, part-time work, internships, research assistantships, or volunteer experiences**.
- Visit the [Hofstra Psych Advising blog](#) and the [Psych Internships blog](#) for current opportunities.

Picking the right courses

- If you are leaning toward a specific career, your Psych Faculty Advisor may be able to point out some particularly relevant courses offered in the major. For example, Social Psychology (Psychology 159), Industrial Psychology (Psychology 33), and Organizational Psychology (Psychology 34) would be useful courses for a marketing career; Child Development (Psychology 153) would be useful for any career that involves working with children.
- A **dual major** or a **minor** in a related field is useful, particularly for students who wish to eventually work in business. The **neuroscience minor** and the **cognitive science minor** also complement the curriculum for the Psychology major. Visit the [Hofstra Psych Advising blog](#) to learn about these minors.

How to search for jobs

If you wish to obtain a job immediately after college, we suggest you take advantage of the resources at [Hofstra’s Career Center](#). Their staff will help you identify the right tools to search for a job, and they will even coach you on interviewing and help you write a resume.

Job options with a graduate degree

As is the case for many majors, most professional careers require at least a master’s degree. Many students with a psych bachelor’s degree go to graduate school in Psychology, and some students earn degrees in other areas (e.g., business, law, medicine). What follows next are descriptions of professional career areas in Psychology. As you consider these career options, you should think about several important questions, such as:

- Is a master’s degree sufficient, or will I need doctoral-level training?
- What are the typical admissions requirements for graduate school?
- Should I do an internship and/or become a research assistant at Hofstra?
- What are the implications of taking time off between undergrad and grad school? (It’s actually not a bad idea!)

We touch upon these questions throughout the career descriptions and we devote more attention to them later in this handbook (see “Tips for Getting into Graduate School”).

Mental Health

We’ll jump right in with mental health careers, but even if you’re positive you want a career in the mental health field, we urge to read beyond this section so that you are aware of all of your options.

Psychologists (the term “Counselors” is nearly synonymous) treat mental, emotional and behavioral disorders. These range from short-term crises, such as difficulties resulting from adolescent conflicts, to more severe, chronic conditions, such as schizophrenia. Some psychologists treat specific problems exclusively, such as phobias or clinical depression. Others focus on specific populations — for instance, youths, families, couples, ethnic minority groups, or older people.

Within the mental health field, there are psychologists who work primarily as researchers, others who work primarily as practitioners (e.g., as therapists or counselors) and many who do both (scientist–practitioners). At Hofstra University, the required three-course research sequence (statistics, research methods, research methods seminar) begins to prepare you for both types of careers. Note that even if you decide to work primarily as a practitioner, you will need to have an in-depth understanding of how research works. This is because you are likely to play a role in selecting the counseling techniques to use with your clients, and there are often dozens of alternative techniques available. Your coursework at Hofstra and in graduate school will provide the tools necessary for comparing the effectiveness of these alternatives.

MASTERS PROGRAMS (two years avg, full-time; part-time is an option)

There are a variety of masters programs in **clinical psychology**, **counseling psychology**, **school psychology**, and **social work** that lead to mental health careers. Some programs may have specialized areas of training such as marriage and family counseling, drug addiction counseling, group counseling, vocational counseling, family therapy, child therapy, divorce mediation, prison counseling, etc. When it comes time to apply for jobs, it's very advantageous to have an area of specialization.

Types of jobs: People with psychology or social work masters degrees usually work in group counseling practices, clinics, schools, or programs for specific populations (e.g., drug abusers).

Admission requirements: Each school is different! But in general:

- min GPA ranges between 3.0 and 3.5.
- Some schools have specific course requirements (e.g., Child Development, Adolescent Psychology, Abnormal Psychology).
- The GRE (general) is required by some but not all schools.
- Three letters of reference (typically from professors or internships/research supervisors)

- Although they are not required, internships and research assistantships might help you narrow down your career goals and hence the types of graduate programs you apply to. For information about internships and research assistantships, visit the [Hofstra Psych Advising blog](#) and the [Psych Internships blog](#).

Which masters degree is right for me?

- Both Clinical and Counseling psychology programs prepare students to perform supervised psychotherapy in individual or group settings. However, Clinical programs typically prepare students to treat clients suffering from more severe mental illnesses.
- Graduates with a masters in School Psychology work with students who have behavioral problems, academic difficulties, disabilities and other issues. They also work with teachers and parents to develop techniques to deal with home and classroom behavior.
- Individuals who earn a masters in social work (MSW) and complete the state requirements to become a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) will likely end up doing work that is similar to that of individuals with a Masters in Clinical or Counseling Psychology
- Some individuals with an MSW may assist with issues not directly related to mental health, for example, making referrals for social services such as food stamps or housing assistance.

Be cautious of:

- On-line masters programs. It will be more difficult to find a job with a degree from an on-line program.
- Masters in Mental Health Counseling programs. Some programs are worthwhile, but the class-size is often quite large. More to the point, no matter what type of program you are considering, pay attention to the student-to-faculty ratio.
- Masters in General Psychology. These programs can vary in their content and quality. Some programs emphasize coursework with little or no research, and in some cases, the coursework you complete might boil down to only a slightly advanced version of the courses you take during your undergraduate education at Hofstra. If you are considering one of these programs, find out what types of jobs recent alumni of that program have landed (you should be able to find this information on the program's website) and meet with your faculty advisor.

Ph.D. PROGRAMS (5-7 years, full-time)

Similar to masters programs, Ph.D. programs in Psychology (e.g., **Clinical Psychology**, **Counseling Psychology**, or **School Psychology**) educate students about issues related to mental health and mental health treatment. However, most Ph.D. programs emphasize research and will require you to take courses in statistics and experimental design. You will be expected to conduct experimental research, which will culminate in your dissertation. A dissertation is a year-long research project that you design and conduct on your own (with help from a committee of faculty members).

The first few years of a typical Ph.D. program will involve training in psychotherapy and psychological testing. An internship is required (typically during the fifth or sixth year). The internship involves full-time work in a hospital, clinic, mental health center, or school.

Types of jobs: People with a Ph.D. in Psychology usually end up in academic positions at colleges or universities, or working in schools, hospitals, clinics, or in private and group practices.

More about academic positions:

- *Tenure-track* academic positions involve teaching, research, and advising duties. Some faculty will counsel clients as well. If you wish to land a tenure-track position, you might need to spend a few years after you finish your Ph.D. in a *post-doc* position. Most people focus on research during their post-doc experiences.
- *Non tenure-track* academic positions are also an option. These might involve teaching, or research, but typically do not combine the two. For example, you might hold a full-time day job at a hospital and also teach an evening course in Abnormal Psychology at a nearby college.

Admissions requirements: The requirements for Ph.D. programs differ across schools, but the requirements for Hofstra's Clinical Ph.D. program are pretty representative:

- The min GPA to apply for Fall 2013 admission was 3.0, but the average GPA of the students who entered (n = 14) was 3.71. Most Ph.D. programs are highly selective.
- Average GRE-Verbal (percentiles) was 87; Average GRE-Quant (percentiles) was 68.
- Average Psychology GRE (percentiles) was 71.
 - Note: The subject (Psychology) GRE is only offered on three occasions each year. If you intend to start grad school right after you graduate from Hofstra and you're applying to programs that require the subject GRE, you'll need to register for it no later than September of your senior year to ensure that the schools receive your scores in time for the application deadline (deadlines can be as early as Dec 1st).
 - Note: Many schools do not require the Psychology GRE.
- Course requirements: Statistics, Research Methods and Design
- Many departments will also recommend additional courses be completed prior to applying, such as: Psychopathology/Abnormal Psychology, History or Systems of Psychology, Physiological Psychology or Sensation/Perception, and Tests and Measurements
- Personal Statement
- Three letters of reference (typically from professors or internship/research supervisors)
- Research experience and/or an internship is rarely required, but it can be the thing that helps you stand out. For up-to-date information about these types of opportunities, visit the [Hofstra Psych Advising blog](#) and the [Psych Internships blog](#).
- Getting into Ph.D. programs can be tough!! You shouldn't necessarily be discouraged if you are not offered admission to any schools during your first attempt. Later on in this handbook we'll provide tips on how to stack the cards in your favor.

Masters versus Ph.D.?

In the mental health field, A Ph.D. may enable you to make more money and may open up different doors for you. However, in many cases a masters degree might be ideal. Given the recent growth of managed care systems in the field of mental health, insurance companies might only pay for therapy provided by clinicians who are part of a group practice. Ph.D.s are often in charge of the group, and they often hire clinicians with masters degrees to do therapy. One last bit about money. While it is true that you might earn more money with a Ph.D., keep in mind, you are likely to pay significantly more for your training (compared to a masters degree).

Psy.D. PROGRAMS (5-6 years, full-time)

Psy.D. programs lead to the degree "Doctor of Psychology" rather than the traditional Ph.D. ("Doctor of Philosophy"). They are appropriate for people who want to practice psychology but who do not wish to be actively engaged in research. As we noted earlier, to be a competent practitioner you will need to understand the outcomes of research. Therefore, there is some research training in Psy.D. programs. However, much more time is spent on learning the various aspects of clinical work (individual and group psychotherapy, testing, marriage and family counseling, school counseling, etc.).

Types of jobs: People with a Psy.D. usually work in hospitals, schools, clinics, and private or group practices.

Admissions requirements: The requirements for Psy.D. programs differ across schools, but the requirements for Hofstra's Psy.D. program in School-Community Psychology are pretty representative:

- Scores on the Verbal and Quantitative sections of the Graduate Record Examination of no less than the 50th percentile.
- Score of no less than the 65th percentile on the Graduate Record Examination, Psychology Section.
- Three letters of recommendation
- Personal statement
- Cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better in the following psychology courses, which must be completed prior to admission:
 - Human Development
 - Statistics
 - Experimental Design or Research Methods
 - History and Systems of Psychology and Physiological Psychology are recommended but not required.

PYSCHIATRY (M.D., plus approx. 3-4 years of training after med school)

After completing medical school, a student can specialize in psychiatry during his/her residency. Training is usually biological in its approach (e.g., drug treatment) although some programs endorse psychodynamic or behavioral therapy.

Types of jobs: Psychiatrists tend to work in hospitals, clinics, and private practice.

Admissions requirements for Medical School: Visit Hofstra's [pre-health advisement](#).

Industrial / Organizational Psychology

When most people hear the word “Psychology,” they often associate it with mental health. However, as you probably know by now, there are several other exciting subfields within Psychology. According to the [US Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), I/O Psychology is the fastest growing occupation in the US. I/O psychologists apply psychological principles and research methods to the workplace in the interest of improving productivity, health and the quality of work life.

MASTERS PROGRAMS - I/O PSYCHOLOGY (2 years)

Masters programs in I/O Psychology prepare students for careers in such areas as human resources, training, management and organization development, in which they can apply psychological principles to problems that arise in a wide variety of organization settings. There is an emphasis in training in research design and statistics. Students will typically complete an internship that provides on-site, supervised experience working on applied projects in business and public agencies.

Types of jobs: I/O Psychologists with a masters degree typically work in employee selection, management development, survey research, training, organizational development, performance appraisal, career development and program evaluation. They are employed in industry, government, hospitals, social services and mental health agencies, advertising, consulting and marketing research.

Admissions requirements: The requirements for I/O masters programs differ across schools, but the requirements for Hofstra's I/O masters program are pretty representative:

- Bachelor's degree (or equivalent) in psychology, business, or a related field with a GPA of B or better.
- Completion of courses in introductory psychology and elementary statistics with a grade of B or better.
- GREs
- Written statement of professional goals.

Ph.D. PROGRAMS – I/O PSYCHOLOGY (3-6 years)

Ph.D. programs in I/O Psychology train students to use the scientific method to solve practical problems in organizations. Training includes a number of research and theory courses, an internship, and a doctoral dissertation that has both practical and theoretical significance. Each of the aforementioned components will typically involve projects in organizations. Laboratory research is typically performed under the supervision of a faculty member, and field research is

conducted under the joint supervision of a faculty member and a representative of the organization.

Types of jobs: Ph.D. Programs in I/O Psychology prepare students for careers as doctoral-level psychologists in business, industry, government, and other private and public organizations. Graduates are trained to apply scientific methods to the solution of problems related to individual and group behavior in organizations. Graduates are also eligible for jobs in academic (higher education) settings.

Admissions requirements: The requirements for I/O masters programs differ across schools, but the requirements for Hofstra's Ph.D. program in Applied Organizational Psychology are pretty representative:

- Master's degree in Psychology, Business, or a related field with a GPA of B or better (for some programs, a master's degree is not required for admission).
- Evidence of successful completion of undergraduate courses in statistics and in the
- GRE
- Personal Potential Index (PPI)
- A personal statement of interests and career intentions.
- Three letters of recommendation.

Other Subfields in Psychology

(adapted from the American Psychological Association [website](#))

For most of the other subfields in Psychology, advanced degrees are offered leading to the Ph.D. or the Psy.D. (5-6 years, full-time). Programs that lead to a terminal masters degree are not common, but there are some exceptions (e.g., Forensic Psychology, School Psychology, and of course I/O Psychology and the Mental Health areas covered earlier).

Behavioral Neuroscience / Neuropsychology

Neuropsychologists (and behavioral neuropsychologists) explore the relationships between brain systems and behavior. For example, behavioral neuropsychologists may study the way the brain creates and stores memories, or how various diseases and injuries of the brain affect emotion, perception and behavior. They design tasks to study normal brain functions with imaging techniques such as positron emission tomography (PET), single photon emission computed tomography (SPECT) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI).

Cognition and Perception

Cognitive and perceptual psychologists study human perception, thinking and memory. They are interested in questions such as how the mind represents stimuli from the environment, how people learn, and how people understand and produce language. Cognitive psychologists also study reasoning, judgment and decision making.

Developmental Psychology

Developmental psychologists study the development of the human being that takes place throughout life. Until recently, the primary focus was on childhood and adolescence, the most formative years. But as life expectancy in this country approaches 80 years, developmental psychologists are becoming increasingly interested in aging, especially in researching and developing ways to help older people stay as independent as possible.

Engineering Psychology / Ergonomics / Human Factors

Engineering Psychologists investigate how humans interact with computers (How can a computer be designed to prevent fatigue and eye strain in people?) and other components of their environment (What arrangement of an assembly line makes production most efficient? What is a reasonable workload?)

Evolutionary Psychology

Evolutionary psychologists study how evolutionary principles such as mutation, adaptation and selective fitness influence human thought, feeling and behavior. Because of their focus on genetically shaped behaviors that influence an organism's chances of survival, evolutionary psychologists study mating, aggression, helping behavior and communication. Evolutionary psychologists are particularly interested in paradoxes and problems of evolution. For example, some behaviors that were highly adaptive in our evolutionary past may no longer be adaptive in the modern world.

Forensic Psychology

Forensic psychologists apply psychological principles to legal issues. Their expertise is often essential within the judicial system. They can, for example, help a judge decide which parent should have custody of a child or evaluate a defendant's mental competence to stand trial. Forensic psychologists also conduct research on jury behavior or eyewitness testimony. Some forensic psychologists are trained in both psychology and the law.

Health Psychology

Health psychologists specialize in how biological, psychological and social factors affect health and illness. They study how patients handle illness, why some people don't follow medical advice and the most effective ways to control pain or change poor health habits. They also develop health care strategies that foster emotional and physical well-being.

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is a relatively new field that examines how ordinary people can become happier and more fulfilled.

Quantitative Psychology

Quantitative psychologists focus on methods and techniques for designing experiments and analyzing psychological data. Some develop new methods for performing analyses; others create research strategies to assess the effect of social and educational programs and psychological treatment. They develop and evaluate mathematical models for psychological tests. They also propose methods for evaluating the quality and fairness of the tests.

Rehabilitation Psychology

Rehabilitation psychologists work with stroke and accident victims, people with mental retardation and those with developmental disabilities caused by such conditions as epilepsy and autism. They help clients adapt to their situation and improve their lives, and they frequently work with other health care professionals. They deal with issues of personal adjustment, interpersonal relations, the work-world and pain management. Rehabilitation psychologists are also involved in public health programs to prevent disabilities, including those caused by violence and substance abuse.

Social Psychology

Social psychologists study how a person's mental life and behavior are shaped by interactions with other people. They are interested in all aspects of interpersonal relationships, including both individual and group influences, and seek ways to improve such interactions. For example, their research helps us understand how people form attitudes toward others and, when these are harmful — as in the case of prejudice — provides insight into ways to change them.

Sport Psychology

Sport psychologists help athletes refine their focus on competition goals, become more motivated, and learn to deal with the anxiety and fear of failure that often accompany competition. The field is growing as sports of all kinds become more competitive and attract younger children.

Job Options

- For all of the subfields listed above, a Ph.D. is required for academic positions at colleges and universities.
- Non-academic positions vary across subfields, and the extent of your “preparedness” for non-academic positions might depend on where you complete your graduate training (as a reminder, although a Ph.D. is often necessary for these positions, there are some exceptions where a masters degree is sufficient).
 - Some examples of non-academic job categories: Data analyst, software developer, marketing researcher, advertising, science writer, publisher, pharmaceutical development, artificial intelligence research, program evaluation, policy development

- Some programs place a larger emphasis on “applied” areas than others (applied usually means you’ll have more options outside of academia). When researching different schools, identify where recent graduates are working. This information should be available on the school’s website. If it isn’t, don’t be shy about contacting the point-person of the program for those details.

Admissions Requirements (typically, 4-6 years)

The requirements differ across sub-fields and schools. Refer to [Graduate Study in Psychology](#) to learn about specific requirements. But here are some general requirements for students applying to Ph.D. programs without prior graduate level experience.

- Personal statement
- GPA of 3.5 or better
- GREs
- Research experience: Evidence of undergraduate research (or post-undergraduate research) involvement is often essential. For up-to-date information about research opportunities, visit the [Hofstra Psych Advising blog](#) and the [Psych Internships blog](#) (sometimes research assistantships will be advertised as “internships”).
- Two-three letters of recommendation

Salary

- The American Psychological Association collects data annually on [faculty salaries](#) in Psychology departments at colleges and universities throughout the US and Canada.
- Data on salaries for jobs outside of academia are also available ([Salaries in Psychology 2009: Report of the 2009 APA Salary Survey](#))

Tips for Applying to Graduate School

Books

If you are considering graduate school in Psychology, we strongly recommend that you purchase the book [Graduate Study in Psychology](#), published by the American Psychological Association. You can also find this book in Hofstra’s library at the Reference Desk (note – the library receives an updated version of this book each year; make sure you look at the current edition). The book lists, by state, most of the graduate psychology programs in this country. It includes information about admission criteria, how many students are accepted each year, number of faculty members,

how to apply, and more. After you have used this book to identify the programs that you might want to apply to, visit the websites of these programs to get more detailed information.

For students who are targeting programs in Clinical and Counseling Psychology, we also recommend [Insider's Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical and Counseling Psychology](#).

Timeline for Applying

If you intend to go to graduate school right after you finish your undergraduate work, here's a rough timetable for preparing your applications:

Between the Spring semester of Junior year and the following Summer:

- Look through [Graduate Study in Psychology](#) and/or [Insider's Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical and Counseling Psychology](#) and construct a list of programs you are interested in.
- Narrow down that list by visiting the website for each program
- Start studying for the Graduate Record Examinations (GREs). **Tip:** Take practice exams and focus on areas where you need the most improvement.
- If you are applying to programs that require the Psychology subject GRE, register for the test and start studying.

Fall semester of Senior year:

September:

- Take the GREs
- For Ph.D./Psy.D. programs, identify faculty members that you would be interested in working with and possibly reach out to them with questions about their research, details about the program, etc.

October/November 2013:

- Request that your undergraduate transcripts be mailed to the institutions to which you're applying.
- Contact your favorite former professors (typically three) and ask for letters of recommendation. **Tip:** Send an information packet to the people who write your letters, including your resume, undergraduate transcript and a list of accomplishments. **Another tip:** Send them a reminder one week an advance of your first admissions deadline.

November/December 2013:

- Write your essays (personal statements). Grad programs look for indications that the applicant has interests that match those of their area, that the applicant knows what the program has to offer, that the applicant's long range goals are appropriate to the training he or she would receive in the program, and that the applicant writes in a manner that indicates the skill to communicate effectively.
- Finalize and mail applications and financial aid forms.

January 2014:

- If needed, file your Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

Apply broadly

For masters programs with average requirements, your chances of admissions offers should be good if you pick a handful of schools for which you have satisfied all of the admissions criteria. However, for Ph.D. and Psy.D. programs, you might need to apply more broadly because the ratio of applicants to positions is much higher. We strongly recommend that you meet with your Psychology Faculty advisor if you are considering these types of programs. They can help you refine your search. If you aren't sure who your advisor is, just visit the [Hofstra Psych Advising blog](#)

APA Accreditation

Some counseling, school, and clinical psychology programs (Ph.D. or Psy.D.) have been approved by the American Psychological Association. This means that the program meets the APA guidelines for "good" training. The two books we have recommended will tell you if a program is APA accredited or not. It is more difficult to get into these programs. Graduating from them may open more doors for you later on. Usually APA-accredited internships prefer students from APA-accredited graduate programs. Furthermore, jobs in the mental health field sometimes require that a person complete an APA-accredited internship.

If a program is not APA accredited, it could mean several things. The program may have lost its approval or has been unable to attain it - which is a bad sign. Or the program may be in the process of applying for approval - which may be a good sign if it is an up-and-coming program.

Expense

For each graduate program that you apply to, figure out how much money you would spend over the course of your education. Some programs, usually those at state universities, might support students for the first few years (and in some cases, all years!!) in the form of stipends or tuition reimbursement. In these situations, students typically get paid for doing research and/or being teaching assistants (which doubles as training for academic positions). As you investigate graduate programs, find out about stipends, teaching and research assistantships, and tuition remission.

What to do if you don't get accepted

Like we've said, getting accepted into graduate programs can be tough, particularly for doctoral programs. It's wise to have a "Plan B" in case you don't get accepted. Think about whether you will try again, or whether you will pursue a different path.

If you are 100% determined to get a Ph.D., here are some things you can do to stack the deck in your favor the next time you apply:

- Get research or internship experience in a relevant field. Try first for a paid position (save up for grad school!), but if that doesn't work, look for volunteer opportunities.
 - See earlier sections of this Handbook for advice on how to search locally. If you move away after graduation, use the resources provided by Psych departments at colleges and Universities near you.
- Consider getting a masters degree first, but think about this carefully. It's possible that not all of your coursework from the masters program will transfer to a Ph.D. program. Some Ph.D. programs prefer to train students right from the start, even if they have earned a masters degree somewhere else.

Does it look bad to take time off before applying to grad school?

No! It's not critical that you apply for admission the Fall semester immediately after you graduate. If you take a year or two off to work, in order to save up money for grad school or to get some experience in psychology, that will look *good* in the eyes of the graduate program. They like motivated, determined people. Just keep in mind that if you drift from job to job without staying connected to the field of Psychology, that might look bad in the eyes of the admissions committee.

Beyond this Handbook

You should plan on doing a significant amount of research beyond this handbook to make an informed decision about what to do after you graduate. We recommended two books already, and below are some other excellent sources to explore. Parts of the information contained within these sources will overlap with our Handbook, but other parts cover ground that we haven't, such as how to approach writing a personal statement and what to expect at a grad school interview. Finally, attend one of our Grad School Info sessions. They are held during common hour once every semester. The day/time is published on the [Hofstra Psych Advising blog](#) toward the beginning of the semester.

Hofstra Psychology Faculty

- It would be well worth your time to meet with one or more faculty members who have gone through graduate training in the areas of psychology that you are considering. Check out the [faculty website](#) to learn about the backgrounds of our faculty members, and then [email them](#) to schedule an appointment.
- Your faculty advisor in the Psychology department went to graduate school, and so he or she is an excellent source of information.

Other useful Documents

- [Information on Graduate School in Clinical Psychology](#), from the Council of University Directors of Clinical Psychology (see also the sources contained within the document)
- [Grad School and Careers in Psychology](#), by Dr. John Suler
- [Grad School Advice](#), by Dr. Sarah Novak
- [Grad School Advice](#), by Dr. Mitchell Prinstein
- [Eye on Psi Chi](#), the publication of the international honor society in Psychology

Professional Organizations

- American Psychological Association
- [Association for Psychological Science](#)
- [Eastern Psychological Association](#)

References

- Suler, J. Graduate Schools and Careers in Psychology. In *John Suler's Teaching Clinical Psychology*, truecenterpublishing.com/gradschl.html (retrieved January 2014).
- American Psychological Association. *Careers in Psychology*, apa.org/careers/resources/guides/careers.aspx (retrieved January 2014).