Acknowledgements

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Of course, the presenters are responsible for the workshop content and any errors
Your Presenters

Dr. John C. Norcross

Dr. Thomas P. Hogan

and APA Leaders & Staff
Workshop Goals

- Take you step-by-step through the preparation, application, interview, and admission processes
- Review key information relevant to decisions
- Guide you on the do’s and don’ts in applying
- Give you a good idea of sources of information that will help you (here and in handouts)
- In the end, increase your probability of acceptance with financial assistance!
The 12 Modules

1. Introducing the Fundamentals
2. Reviewing Career Options in Psychology
3. Constructing Your Time Line
4. Getting the Courses, Research, and Experiences
5. Facing & Conquering the GREs
6. Understanding Admission Criteria and Acceptance Rates
7. Identifying Compatible Programs
8. Writing Personal Statements
9. Securing Letters of Recommendation
10. Completing Applications
11. Mastering Graduate Interviews
12. Making Final Decisions

Each module 20 - 25 minutes
Prefatory Remarks

- Can watch these modules separately or together, as individuals or in groups/classes
- Based on our experience as admission comm members, professors & deans, and grad school researchers
- We have empirical answers to many of your questions; you don’t have to rely on guesswork or folk wisdom
- Drawn generously from the research of APA Workforce, Norcross et al., Keith-Spiegel, Appleby, and other researchers
The Handouts

Following Handouts available on APA website:

- The 12 Workshop Modules
- The Workshop Presenters
- Two Formats for Curriculum Vitae
- Mean Acceptance Rates of Graduate Programs in Psychology
- Mean Acceptance Rates and Financial Assistance in Clinical Psychology
- Average GPAs and GREs of First-Year Graduate Students in Psychology
- Organization Table for Graduate Applications
- Sample Letter to Request a Letter of Recommendation
- Interview Questions an Applicant Might Ask
- Common Interview Questions to Anticipate
- Student Reasons for Choosing a Clinical Psychology Program
- References and Resources

- May want to open that page or print handouts
- Share and use handouts, but please maintain the source/copyright
1. Getting Started and Introducing the Fundamentals

John C. Norcross, PhD
Thomas P. Hogan, PhD
Our Meta-Messages

We share your excitement about the wonderful, delicious career opportunities in psychology!

We care about your success and your future!

♦ most of these skills can be learned and mastered
♦ our guidance and your preparation increase the probability of your success
♦ getting into grad school is a function of both (1) your credentials and (2) your understanding & effort
The Fundamentals

- BA/BS (4 full-time years)
- MA/MS/MSW/MEd (2 full-time years)
  - school psych 2.5 years
- PsyD (4.5 full-time years)
- PhD (6 full-time years)

All are averages; individuals vary (as you know)
Psychology Degrees Awarded Annually

- Bachelor's
- Master's
- Doctor's

114,000 in 2014
Does A Master’s First Help to Get into a Doctoral Program?

Yes and No...

Yes

- Can remedy shortcomings
- Can enhance credentials
- For PsyD programs in particular

No

- Possession of MS/MA *per se* does not enhance unless shortcomings remedied
- Can also validate shortcomings
Reasons You are Applying

- Why?
- Cost is substantial
- Competition is stiff (especially for PhD)
- Make sure you really want to go
- Apply wisely

**Should You Go to Grad School?**
A Wee Test

- I am a compulsive neurotic.
- I like my imagination crushed into dust.
- I enjoy being a professor’s slave.
- My idea of a good time is using jargon and citing authorities.
- I feel a deep need to continue the process of avoiding life.
Sources of Information

- Graduate Study in Psychology 2015 by the American Psychological Association
- Insider's Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical and Counseling Psychology by John C. Norcross and Michael A. Sayette
More Sources of Information

The Complete Guide to Graduate School Admission

Psychology, Counseling, and Related Professions

Patricia Keith-Spiegel
Michael W. Wiederman

Apes and Their Future in Comparative Psychology

A Conversation With Dr. Duane Rumbaugh

Psi Chi Officers Can Develop
the Skills Employers Seek
Searching for a Research Topic?
Study Your Transition
Questions (and Answers) About

Graduate School
Specialized Sources

By subdiscipline

Society for Neuroscience
Neuroscience Departments and Programs Directory

SIOP’s Graduate Training Programs in Industrial-Organizational Psychology and Related Fields

By applicant characteristic

APA RESOURCE GUIDE for psychology graduate students with disabilities

Directory of Graduate Programs in Applied Sport Psychology

ABCT
Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies

American Psychological Association of Graduate Students
A Fun Preview

How NOT to Get into Graduate School
Courtesy of Drew Appleby, PhD

We will learn from others’ mistakes and negative examples (Kisses of Death)
#10 Kiss of Death

Make sure the admissions committee knows you would prefer to socialize with them rather than with your fellow graduate students because of your unusually high level of intelligence.
#9 Kiss of Death

Drop those tough classes, and pad your schedule with easy courses to boost your GPA.
#8 Kiss of Death

Blame as many people as possible for your bad grades

- Unfair professors
- Other students
- Your ex-boyfriend or girlfriend
- Roommates who kept you up all night
- Financial aid incompetents
#7 Kiss of Death

- Handwrite your application with purple ink on pink paper

- Be sure to include some spelling and grammar errors in your application two prove your not a perfectionist.
#6 Kiss of Death

- Have your mom or therapist write a letter of recommendation for you.
- Better yet, write one for yourself!
#5 Kiss of Death

Tell the admissions committee you’re not interested in research — especially the kind of research being conducted in their department.
#4 Kiss of Death

Make sure you identify your main professional goal as, “I just want to help people.”
#3 Kiss of Death

Ensure your letters of recommendation stand out from the pile by . . .

- Not getting to know your professors
- Rarely attending class
- Arriving late when you do
- Asking intelligent questions like, “Will that be on the test?” or “Did we talk about anything important today?” after you missed class
#2 Kiss of Death

Describe how graduate school is your next step in personal therapy.
#1 Kiss of Death

Express an interest in doing research with a deceased faculty member in an area of specialization that is not offered by the program.
Again: ‘Tis Your Preparation

Appleby concludes:
Although many of the kisses of death described in this presentation appear to have been committed by people who are not very bright, I firmly believe that the majority of them resulted from a lack of appropriate mentoring in the graduate school application process.
Let’s Get Started...

Enhancing your preparation for graduate school and increasing your acceptance odds with financial assistance
Preparing and Applying for Graduate School in Psychology: 12 Modules

John C. Norcross, PhD
Thomas P. Hogan, PhD
The 12 Modules

1. Introducing the Fundamentals
2. Reviewing Career Options in Psychology
3. Constructing Your Time Line
4. Getting the Courses, Research, and Experiences
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11. Mastering Graduate Interviews
12. Making Final Decisions
2. Reviewing Career Options in Psychology

John C. Norcross, PhD
Thomas P. Hogan, PhD
Our Itinerary

- Psychology subfields
- Training models in professional \( \Psi \)
- Accreditation and licensure
- The unique cases of school and I/O \( \Psi \)
- Practice alternatives
- Research alternatives
Psychology Subfields

- Clinical
- Counseling
- School
- Developmental
- Educational
- Social & Personality
- Industrial/Organizational
- Research, Biological
- Other Subfields
Two Training Models in Clinical Psychology

PhD (Boulder model) vs PsyD (Vail model)

- Important differences!
Boulder Model

- In 1949, first national training conference of Clinical Psychology (CP) held in Boulder, CO
- Equal weight accorded to developing research skills and clinical skills: scientist-practitioner
- Boulder Conference was milestone:
  - Established PhD as required degree (like other academic-research fields)
  - Training in graduate school within universities
  - Simultaneous existence in 2 worlds: academic/scientific and clinical/professional
Vail Model

♦ In 1973, national conference in CP held in Vail, CO
♦ Vail Model conferees endorsed different principles
  ♦ Different degrees should be used to designate the scientist (PhD) and the practitioner (PsyD)
  ♦ More training sites (like other prof degrees)
    ♦ Within a psychology department
    ♦ Within a university-affiliated psych school
    ♦ Independent, “free standing” psych school
Professional Schools

- Vail-model professional schools have proliferated
- One-half of new degrees in CP (and a few in counseling & school psychology) are now PsyDs
- Confusion! Not all prof schools went with PsyD
- Professional school does not always equal PsyD
- But PsyD always means practitioner degree
Differences between Boulder & Vail Programs

1. *Research skills:* Producers vs. consumers of research
2. *Length of training:* PhD 1 to 1.5 years longer
3. *Acceptance rates:* PhD accept ≈8%; PsyD 40 - 50% of applicants
4. *Financial assistance:* ≈1% of PsyD students receive full financial assistance; ≈85% of PhD students receive full
5. *Loan debt:* Median grad debt for PsyD is now $180,000
6. *Accredited internships:* Freestanding PsyD match at a lower rate
7. *Licensure exam scores:* PsyD students attending large programs score lower, on average
Getting In: Average Acceptance %

Getting Money: Average % Full Support

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<th>Free standing PsyD</th>
<th>Univ Profes PsyD</th>
<th>Univ Dept PsyD</th>
<th>Practice-oriented PhD</th>
<th>Equal emphasis PhD</th>
<th>Reseach-oriented PhD</th>
<th>% of applicants accepted</th>
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Legend:
- Free standing PsyD
- Univ Profes PsyD
- Univ Dept PsyD
- Practice-oriented PhD
- Equal emphasis PhD
- Reseach-oriented PhD
Practice – Science Continuum

Practitioners  Scientist-Practitioners  Clinical Scientists

PsyD  PhD  PhD
Practice Emphasis  Equal Emphasis  Research Emphasis
The model differences do not reliably favor one training model over the other.

Recognize the heterogeneity in training models.

Important caveat for employment in full-time academia and medical schools.

Your informed choice: match to your interests & career trajectory (if in doubt, go broad with equal-emphasis, scientist-practitioner PhD).
Accreditation & Licensure: Psychology

- APA accredits only doctoral programs and only in 4 areas: clinical, counseling, school, and combined psychology.
- Consensus on need to attend APA-accredited program ranges from “important” to “essential” (in future, becoming even more urgent).
- Other references to accreditation pertain to the entire institution, not to program accreditation.
- Licensure as psychology is in 48/50 states requires the doctorate.
Accreditation & Licensure: Related Fields

- Social workers, professional counselors, & MFTs now licensed in virtually all states at master’s level
- Each discipline accredits its respective programs, e.g., CACREP in counseling
- Check for accreditation of the graduate program, not only the institution
- A word of caution about online-only graduate programs
Unique Cases of School and I/O $\Psi$

♦ Terminal degrees in school psychology and I/O are typically the master’s
♦ But doctoral degrees available in both
♦ At master’s level, school psychologists are certified by State Department of Education
♦ At doctoral level, school psychologists licensed as independent psychs by State Board of Psychology
♦ Industrial/organizational $\Psi$: individual in the workplace
Practice Alternatives

6 core mental health professions recognized across nation

Doctoral level
- Psychology (PhD, PsyD)
- Psychiatry (MD, DO)

Master’s level
- Psych Nursing (RN + MSN or CRNP)
- Clinical Social Work (MSW)
- Counseling (MA, MS)
- Marital & Family Therapy (MA, MFT)
  (but not “psychotherapist”)

How Doctoral Psychologists Differ from Master's-Level Professionals

- Longer training (6+ versus 2 full-time years)
- Ability to conduct psychological testing
- Advanced competence in statistics and research
- Practice more likely guided by research/science
- Wider range of employment settings; mobility
- Involved in larger number of professional activities
- Higher salary across the career lifespan

The doctorate in Ψ is not for everyone!
Perhaps an Allied Field?

The psychology major is superb preparation for a host of other fields requiring graduate degrees:

- OT
- PT
- Teaching
- Speech pathology
- Law
- Human resources
- Management
Which Clinical/Practice Area for You?

♦ What do you want to do? If largely doing therapy, then need not be psychology. If research and teaching and practice, then psychology.

♦ How much longer do you desire to be in school? 6+ versus 2 full-time years.

♦ Does research and science fascinate you? Then, PhD not PsyD.

♦ Can you afford doctoral training?

♦ Have you interned or shadowed various mental health professionals?
Research Alternatives

- Social Ψ: influence of social/environment on behavior
- Behavioral neuroscience: workings of the brain & its influences on behavior
- Developmental Ψ: behavior across lifespan
- Cognitive Ψ: human thought processes
- Quantitative Ψ: measurement and psychometrics
- Sport Ψ: performance enhancement, mental rehearsal
- Many others in the broad, exciting discipline of psychology!
Search & Investigate

- Track your interest as you complete psych courses
- Peruse handbooks, journals, websites in the areas
- Review careers in psychology books
- Speak to faculty members
- Obtain jobs, internships, volunteer positions
- Conduct informational interviews

The Irony: You are asked to commit to something you haven’t done yet
Best of Success

in reviewing your career options!

Success.
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3. Constructing Your Time Line

Thomas P. Hogan, PhD
John C. Norcross, PhD
Modal Timeline

- Work through the modal timeline
- Assumes traditional four-year program
- Headed for grad school immediately after graduation
- Variations on it for 5-year or mid-career
- And master’s vs doctoral programs

'Planning is EVERYTHING!'
Modal Timeline: Worksheet

Do a worksheet like this and follow along

My Timeline

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior
Modal Timeline

- Work through the modal timeline
  - Assumes traditional four-year program
  - Headed for grad school immediately after graduation
- Variations on it for 5-year or mid-career
- And master’s vs doctoral programs
Modal Timeline: Worksheet

Do a worksheet like this and follow along

My Timeline

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Graduate School Application Timeline
Modal Timeline

- Freshman and sophomore years
  - Background work
- Junior year
  - It starts to get intense
  - Crucial items to have in place
- Senior year
  - Really active – it all happens fast
  - It takes a lot of time
Freshman & Sophomore Years

- Take core psych courses
  - Intro, stat, research, abnormal, cognitive, etc.
- Take general education courses
  - Including math, science, writing, speaking
  - Don’t go only for the easy ones!
- Get involved
  - Volunteer
  - Department activities
  - Check on research possibilities (end of soph year)
- Begin to explore career opportunities
Junior Year I

- Applications for doctoral programs due toward end of Fall semester senior year
- So by end of junior year, everything in order:
  - GPA – nearly final
  - Courses needed for GRE Subject – mostly done
  - Research well along, submit to present next year
  - Contacts with faculty recommenders established
- Your record is going out Dec of senior year!
Junior Year II

- Take advanced psych courses
- Draft a curriculum vitae (see handout)
- Visit Career Services Office
- Begin regular meetings with faculty mentor
- Do realistic self-assessment
- Semester abroad?
  
  (Coordinate with stat/research methods sequence at your school)
Junior Year III

- Begin to focus your interests (you can always change)
- Start collecting info about grad programs
  - Plus online for specific programs
- Get info about GRE, start practice tests (see mod 5)
- Get involved in research project with faculty
- Engage in relevant volunteer/practicum work
- Begin work on “alternate plan”
Application Year  
(usually senior)

- An intense process requiring at least the workload of another 3-credit college course
- Position yourself for a busy Fall (if doctoral) and Spring (if interviews); Fall & Spring (master’s)
- It actually begins in summer, between junior and senior years (June-Aug for traditional calendar)
- Take application process seriously (or not at all)
Application Year: Summer

- Continue research, practical/clinical work
- Prepare for GRE General Test
- Take GRE General NOW or in Fall
- Narrow search of schools/programs
- Set aside $ for GREs, application fees
- Research financial aid for grad studies
Application Year: Sept-Oct

- GRE General – no later than October
- Register for GRE Subject (if needed)
- Download application materials for programs
- Finalize list of schools/programs
- Identify faculty in those programs
- Do spreadsheet with deadlines & requirements
- Draft personal statement, get feedback
Application Year: Oct-Nov

♦ Get & inspect copy of transcript (correct as needed)
♦ Take GRE Subject Test in Psychology
  * See separate modules on these steps
♦ Request letters of recommendation*
♦ Finalize personal statement*
♦ Prepare packets for recommenders*
♦ Gather information on financial aid
Application Year: Nov-Dec

- Complete and send all applications
- Arrange for transcripts to be sent (official, $)
- Ensure recommendations completed
- Request GRE scores be sent (as needed)
- Contact professors at target schools
- Balance all this with regular academic life!

APPLY NOW
Application Year: Jan-March

- White knuckle time
- Insure documents sent (transcripts, letters, etc.)
- Practice for admission interviews (module 11)
- Travel to interviews as invited
- Be prepared for telephone or Skype interviews (maybe surprise)
- Refresh "alt plan"
Application Year: April-May

- April 1 deadline for notifications (APA doctoral)
- April 15 for acceptances (if financial assistance)
- Accept! (Gloat, but silently)
- Notify programs where accepted but declined
- If denied, await backups
- Finalize financial arrangements
- Inform recommenders of outcomes
- If necessary, activate "alt plan"
Application Year: Master’s Jan-May

♦ Submit all applications
♦ Some may have interviews, many not
♦ Same procedures as for doctoral for
  ♦ Statement of purpose
  ♦ Letters of recommendation
♦ Admit notifications vary; some “rolling”

APPLY NOW
The “Alt Plan"

♦ If planning on doctoral, do master’s first
♦ Do a “fifth” year or post-bacc program to obtain experience, especially research
♦ Work for a year or two to secure practical and research competencies
♦ Investigate related and different fields – there are lots of good possibilities
Best of Success

in constructing your time line!
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12. Making Final Decisions
4. Getting the Necessary Courses, Research, and Experiences

John C. Norcross, PhD
Thomas P. Hogan, PhD
What You Need

- Prerequisite undergrad courses
- High grade point average (GPA)
- Good GRE scores (separate module)
- Research experience
- Practical/clinical experience
- Extracurricular activities

Yes, grad schools want everything… Let’s talk about how you can get what they want!
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Type of Prerequisite</th>
<th>Master’s programs</th>
<th>Doctoral programs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum # of psych credits</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific psychology courses</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Both specific psych courses &amp; minimum # of credits</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychology major</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
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Bottom Line

♦ A rigorous minor in psych (consisting of the required courses) will suffice for 85% of grad programs

♦ A psychology major is safer and preferred: will meet admission criteria at all programs and will enhance other credentials (e.g., research experience, letters, GRE Psychology Subject Test)

♦ In your coursework, take the core courses and minimize the # of psych electives

♦ Remember to take laboratory courses and research
Prerequisite Ψ Courses

♦ Most grad programs require: stats, research methods, abnormal, developmental, and a laboratory course in Ψ

♦ Additional recommendations: neuroscience/physio, social Ψ, cognitive, psych testing, learning, personality

♦ PhD want research experiences; PsyD desire abnormal, personality, psych testing courses

♦ Do not take only easy courses

Research Experience

- 4 P’s: **Pursue Publications & Presentations or Perish**
- Best if research is in psych area in which you are applying (but not necessary)
- Leads to most beneficial recommendations
- Attend research conferences
- Seek to obtain both research skills & interpersonal goals
Common Avenues to Pursue Research

- Volunteering to work with faculty
- Completing a student research program
- Enrolling in independent research for credit
- Working or volunteering on research project outside of your university
- Completing an honor's thesis
- Completing a master's thesis
Arranging for Research

- Determine your interests
- Select professors
  - Ask other students about professors
  - Narrow choices to two or three
  - Consider reputation for working with undergrads
- Make initial contact
- Negotiate research responsibilities
  - Be prepared for grunt work
  - Learn special skills (e.g., administration and scoring of a test, statistical processing software)
Arranging Credit & Semesters

- Take advantage of multiple opportunities!
- Expect to spend 2 semesters on a project
- Apply for small grants from your university and professional associations (e.g., Psi Chi)
- Consider working with more than 1 professor, but do not stretch yourself too thin
- Look for a coauthored presentation or pub
- Ideal time to begin is summer
Practical/Clinical Experience

- Especially for those seeking health care or applied careers
- As an undergraduate, obtain two experiences of at least 100 hours each
- Supervised hours!
- Typically accorded half the importance of other admission criteria
- Thus, helpful but not at expense of GPA or research experience
Common Avenues to Pursue Clinical Experience

- Summer camps
- Psychiatric hospitals
- College peer programs
- Women’s resource centers
- Legal and probation offices
- Crisis or emergency hot lines
- Community mental health centers
- Drug and alcohol treatment facilities
- Centers for runaway/homeless adolescents
- Schools/services for emotionally disturbed youth
- Homes for the developmentally or mentally disabled
A Bonus: Teaching Assistantship

- Increasingly frequent for advanced undergraduates
- Wonderful way to determine if your interests lie in teaching and academia
- Can develop teaching experience and skills valued by graduate schools
- Many recommendation forms ask about your teaching potential
- Determine whether available in your department
- If so, inquire and negotiate specific duties
Extracurricular Activities

- Accordered less weight than GPA, GRE scores, research experience, and clinical experience
- However, grad schools seek well-rounded, active “good citizens”
- Join departmental organizations
- Become an APA or APS student affiliate
- Direct non-study time toward your goals (e.g., social service club > ski club)
- Attend a regional or national psychology conference
- Balance is the key!
Mentor: The Ultimate Resource
Faculty Mentoring

- Find the skills to regularly approach professors
- Students report interaction with faculty member is the largest factor in preparedness for grad school
- One-on-one mentorship important in many ways: Letters of recomm, research & clinical work, leadership positions, advice on grad school, etc.
- Find and cultivate a mentor!
- Mentors come in many guises…
Frequent Mentoring Resources

1. Academic Advising Center
2. Department website/handbook
3. Assigned psychology advisor
4. Additional psychology faculty
5. Career development seminars
6. Published books (see handouts)
7. Counseling Center
8. Web pages
9. Career Services
10. These modules!
Best of Success
in obtaining the necessary courses, research, and experiences!
Preparing and Applying for Graduate School in Psychology:
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5. Facing and Conquering the GREs

Thomas P. Hogan, PhD
John C. Norcross, PhD
GRE: General Information

GRE General, aka GRE revised General

- Most doctoral programs require
- Some master’s programs require

GRE Subject Test in Psychology, aka GRE Psychology Test

- Some doctoral programs require
- Very few master’s programs require
GRE: General Information

- Become proficient using the website: https://www.ets.org/gre
- Test structure
- Practice material
- Score reporting
- Alternate testing arrangements
- Registration
- Create account for yourself (easy to do)
GRE General Test

- On computer, computer-adaptive (partially)
- $195 per administration
- Includes score reports to 4 schools
- $25 for each additional score report
- Given year-round, many test dates
- At commercial testing sites
- May take once every 21 days
- 5 times in any 12-month period
- All registration online – in your account
GRE General Test: Sections

- **Verbal Reasoning** (2 sections, ≈ 20 q’s, 30 mins per sect)
  - Reading comprehension, text completion, sentence equivalence, recognize relationships between words and concepts

- **Quantitative Reasoning** (2 sections, ≈ 20 q’s, 35 mins per sect)
  - Arithmetic, algebra, geometry, data analysis (no calculus or advanced math)

- **Scales for V & Q** = 130 - 170 ($M = 150$, $SD \approx 9$)
  - Old scale was 200-800, $M \approx 500$. Many sources still refer to this scale.
  - Search “GRE Concordance Tables” if you need to convert.

- **Analytical Writing** (2 writing tasks; 30 minutes each)
  - Analyze an Argument; Analyze an Issue

- **Scale** = 0 - 6 (1/2-point increments, holistic scoring)

- **Total Time** = 4 – 5 hours
GRE General Test: Studying

- ‘Tis a sieve, not an all determining factor
- Check APA guide for “importance” (see next) and program sites for average scores
- MONTHS of preparation!
- Take practice tests
- Consider prep course (about $1,000)
- At minimum, use GRE practice books & free software
- Night before = relax & review quant formulas
Check Your Programs in APA Graduate Study in Psychology

*Other Criteria:* (importance of criteria rated low, medium, or high): **GRE scores** – high, **research experience** – high, **work experience** – low, **extracurricular activity** – low, **GPA** – high, **letters of recommendation** – high, **interview** – medium, **statement of goals and objectives** – high, **undergraduate major in psychology** – medium, **specific undergraduate psychology courses taken** – medium, Some science background is helpful for the Integrative Neuroscience program. For additional information on admission requirements, go to http://psychology.uchicago.edu.
GRE Scores

♦ GRE score reports are electronically sent to the 4 graduate schools you list

♦ 2 scores (V&Q) reported on spot; AW score comes later in a few weeks

♦ Score reports sent to grad schools 4-6 weeks after test

♦ Grad programs require official ETS transmission, not a copy of your personal score report

♦ ETS pledges to "make every effort to send your score reports within 10 working days after receipt of your request," but you should allow for at least 1 month
“GRE® tests all provide the ScoreSelect® option, which means you can take a GRE test once now, or again in the future, and only send the GRE test scores from whichever test date(s) you want schools to see. Best of all, you always have five years to decide. Here's how it works:

- **On test day**, when viewing your scores at the test center, you can choose not to send your scores at this time OR you can select either option below for each of your four FREE score reports:

  - **Most Recent** option — Send your scores from your current test administration.
  - **All** option — Send your scores from all General Test administrations in the last five years.
“After test day, you can send additional score reports for a fee and select from these options for each report you'd like to send:

**Most Recent** option — Send your scores from your most recent test administration.

**All** option — Send your scores from all test administrations in the last five years.

**Any** option — Send your scores from one OR as many test administrations as you like from the last five years.

No matter which option you choose:
You will select by specific test dates, so your scores are all from the same testing session.
The schools you designate will only see the scores that you selected. There will be no indication if you have taken additional GRE tests.

Available for both GRE General Test and GRE Subject Tests
GRE Psychology Test

- Traditional paper-and-pencil
- About 200 five-option mc items
- 2 hrs, 50 minutes
- Covers all major subfields
- 1 total score, 2 subscores (Experimental, Social)
- $150 (includes 4 score reports; $25 for each additional)
- Given 3 times per year (Saturdays) at selected sites (check GRE website for exact locations, dates)
- 200 - 800 score scale (mean ≈ 530)
GRE Psych Test: Studying

- Max 30 hours of preparation
- Review an Intro to Psych text
  - If don’t have yours, readily available
- TA for an Intro to Psych course
- Work through Psych Subject Practice Test books
  - Free downloadable booklet from ETS
  - Several commercial guides
Retake the GRE?

- How many times?
  - It’s not like SAT and ACT
- Weigh likely outcome against expense
  - General
  - Subject
- How schools treat multiple scores
Best of Success

in conquering the GREs!
Preparing and Applying for Graduate School in Psychology: 12 Modules

John C. Norcross, PhD
Thomas P. Hogan, PhD
The 12 Modules

1. Introducing the Fundamentals
2. Reviewing Career Options in Psychology
3. Constructing Your Time Line
4. Getting the Courses, Research, and Experiences
5. Facing & Conquering the GREs
6. Understanding Admission Criteria and Acceptance Rates
7. Identifying Compatible Programs
8. Writing Personal Statements
9. Securing Letters of Recommendation
10. Completing Your Applications
11. Mastering Graduate Interviews
12. Making Final Decisions
6. Understanding Admission Criteria and Acceptance Rates

John C. Norcross, PhD
Thomas P. Hogan, PhD
Admissions Criteria

♦ More questions & anxieties here than in any other
♦ Examples: What GPA do I need? Are my GRE scores high enough? What if I don’t have any experience? How tough is it to get into grad school?
♦ What follows is mainly factual summaries for groups of programs
♦ For individual programs, see the sources of information
♦ Now let’s examine and apply the facts…
# Importance of Criteria in Graduate Admission Decisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Master's</th>
<th>Doctoral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letters of recommendation</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal statement/goals</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research experience</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRE scores</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinically related public service</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular activity</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = low importance, 2 = medium importance, and 3 = high importance

Take Homes on Criteria

- Attend to what grad programs desire (not what you hope they desire)
- Letters, grades, GREs, personal statements, & research experience lead the way
- Two big differences between doctoral and master’s programs in what they value (interview, research)
- The more competitive the program, the more they can demand
- Also attend to what does not count as much and allocate your time accordingly
## Top Final Selection Criteria for PhD Admissions (top 10 of 30)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Rank order</th>
<th>Mean score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research experience, resulting in a publication</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant's skills and interests match the program</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research experience, resulting in a paper presentation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of faculty interest in working with applicant</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity and focus of applicant's statement of purpose</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research assistant experience</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing skills as revealed in statement of purpose</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status and reputation of applicant's referees</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A strong, advocating mentor</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underrepresented ethnic minority group membership</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## What Doesn’t Count

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Rank order</th>
<th>Mean score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree to which applicant would help to balance the sex ratio</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psi Chi membership</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilingual fluency</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to geographic diversity</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legacy status (i.e., close relation of applicant to graduate of program)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Minimum Required & Actual Scores of Doctoral Students in Psychology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Minimum Required for Consideration Mean</th>
<th>Actual Scores of Incoming Students Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate Record Examination</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal + Quantitative</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology Subject Test</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade point average</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last two years</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Minimum Required & Actual Scores of Master’s Students in Psychology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Minimum Required for Consideration Mean</th>
<th>Actual Scores of Incoming Students Mean</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate Record Examination</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal + Quantitative</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology Subject Test</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade point average</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last two years</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Take Homes on GPAs

Mean for PhD programs

- 3.6 overall, 3.7 psych
- under 3.1 = problematic

Mean for PsyD programs

- variable but lower than PhD
- under 3.0 = problematic

Mean GPA for Master’s programs

- 3.4 overall, 3.5 psych
Take Homes on GREs

PhD programs
- minimum V + Q of 300
- average V + Q of 310
- insufficient data on Analytical Writing scores

PsyD programs
- approximately one-third do not require
- vary by type of PsyD program

Master’s programs
- minimum V + Q of 290
- average V + Q of 300
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Doctoral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Psychology</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>(later slides)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Psychology</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling Psychology</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Psychology</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Psychology</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Psychology</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Psychology</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I/O Psychology</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroscience</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Psychology</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Psychology</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social &amp; Person Psychology</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Take Homes on Accept Rates

- Warm fuzzy: Acceptance rates in master’s programs are quite high and pleasing (1 in 2 applicants get into any single program)
- Applying to multiple programs obviously increases chances of acceptance
- Reality shock: Acceptance rates into PhD programs quite low and challenging (1 in 5 to 8 applicants get into any single program)
Averages Mask Variability

- Organized psychology and individual graduate programs make special efforts to recruit and retain “minority” students (e.g., 80 – 82% of clinical doctoral programs)

- “Minority” in this case refers to students of color, men (80% of doctoral students in psych are women), and for some programs, LGB and international students

- Thus, acceptance rates may be higher than the averages presented here

- But a modest advantage is no guarantee; so take a rigorous approach to the preparation and application processes
## Mean Acceptance Rates & Financial Assistance by Type of Clinical Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Program</th>
<th>Free-standing PsyD</th>
<th>University-based PsyD</th>
<th>Practice-oriented PhD</th>
<th>Equal-emphasis PhD</th>
<th>Research-oriented PhD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% accepted</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% incoming students given</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tuition waiver only</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assistantship only</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waiver &amp; assistantship</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Take Homes on Clinical Programs

- The diverse training models do not permit single-number generalizations; huge range in acceptance rates (7% to 50%) to APA-accredited programs.
- Easier acceptance into PsyD programs comes at a cost: little funding, more debt, lower match rates.
- The grueling accept rate into PhD clinical programs typically brings financial awards (89% of students receive full boats).
- Appreciate the heterogeneity & make informed choices.
Best of Success

in understanding admission criteria and acceptance rates!

Success.
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12 Modules

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The 12 Modules

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8. Writing Personal Statements
9. Securing Letters of Recommendation
10. Completing Your Applications
11. Mastering Graduate Interviews
12. Making Final Decisions
7. Identifying Compatible Graduate Programs

John C. Norcross, PhD
Thomas P. Hogan, PhD
Before You Identify Programs

Know what you want to do!

♦ Type of degree (masters, doctoral, perhaps both) and area of program (e.g., social, clinical, quant, or outside of psychology)

♦ Put the horse before the cart: Decide the field first, then locate specific graduate programs

♦ For students interested in clinical, recall the practice-scientist continuum (practice, equal emphasis, research)
A Kiss of Death: Not Doing Your Homework

“A mismatch of interests between the student and the department faculty. When it is clear that the student has not done his/her homework in selecting programs which match their interests; that’s a kiss of death.”

“Failure to read program information—sometimes students note that they wish to work in an area we don’t offer or with a faculty member who has retired, died, or relocated.”
Background Work

- Begin only when you have determined the fields of interest
- Decide whether you are ready (know thyself)
- Gather program information
  - Use the key sources (e.g., APA Graduate Study in Psychology, Petersons.com, Insider’s Guide)
  - Seek specialty websites (e.g., SIOP, sport psych, APA Division 5 listings)
  - Look at the program websites
### Graduate Study: Advanced Search

#### Institutions
- **Institution name:**
- **Department name:**
- **State/Province:**

#### Programs Offered
- **Program name:**
- **Degree type:**
- **Accreditation:**
  - Restrict search to APA-accredited programs (for clinical, counseling, school, or combined professional-scientific psychology programs only)
- **Emphasis:**

#### Admissions Requirements
*Not all institutions report score requirements. Specifying criteria for Admissions Requirements will omit institutions that do not report information about the test or GPA chosen below.*

Find records where **[test or GPA]** for a **[degree]** program...
- **[is required]**
- **[is not required]**
- **the minimum score for this test is [no greater than]**
- **the median score for this test is between [and]**

#### Tuition
Find records where the tuition for a...
- **[degree]** program for **[residential status]** is less than **[per]** **[unit]**

#### Financial Assistance
Find records where **[type of financial assistance]** are available for **[rank]** students...
- **and the average amount paid per year is at least**
- **and the average number of hours worked per week is at most**
- **and [amount] tuition remission is given.**
Representative program profile in the Insider’s Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical & Counseling Psychology

George Washington University (Ph.D.)
Department of Psychology
2125 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20052
Phone: 202-994-6320
E-mail: cgee@gwu.edu
Web address: departments.columbia.gwu.edu/psychology/graduate/clinical

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice oriented</th>
<th>Equal emphasis</th>
<th>Research oriented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of faculty subscribing to each of the following orientations:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychodynamic/Psychoanalytic</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied behavioral analysis/Radical behavioral</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/systems/systems</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existential/Phenomenological/Humanistic</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive/Cognitive-behavioral</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community/Ecological</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Courses required for incoming students to have completed prior to enrolling:
The equivalent of a major in psychology, statistics, research methods (or experimental course), basic psychology theory courses (from neuropsychology, physiological psychology, abnormal psychology, social psychology, learning and cognition, developmental psychology, community psychology)

Recommended but not mandatory courses: None

GRE mean
Verbal 161 (85th percentile) Quantitative 154 (58th percentile)
Analytical Writing 4.3 (65th percentile)
Psychology Subject Test not reported

GPA mean
Overall GPA 3.62

Number of applications/admission offers/incoming students in 2013
314 applied/9 admission offers/6 incoming

% of students receiving:
Full tuition waiver only: 0%
Assistantship/fellowship only: 0%
Both full tuition waiver & assistantship/fellowship: 100%

Approximate percentage of incoming students with a B.A./B.S. only: 83.33% Master's: 16.67%

Approximate percentage of students who are Women: 67.7% Ethnic Minority: 42% International: 3%

Average years to complete the doctoral program (including internship): 6.4 years

Personal interview
Preferred in person but telephone/Skype acceptable

Attrition rate in past 7 years: 3%

Percentage of students applying for internship in 2013 accepted into:
APA internships: 83.33% APPIC internships: not reported

Formal tracks/concentrations: none

Research areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># Faculty</th>
<th># Grants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adolescence</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS/HIV</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anxiety disorders</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community/prevention</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>depression</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family/couples</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minority mental health</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stress and coping</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clinical opportunities
adolescent problems
AIDS
adolescent delinquency
affection disorders/depression
anxiety disorders/assessment
behavioral medicine
child assessment and therapy
conduct disorder
developmental disabilities/autism
eating disorders
family therapy
genetic psychology

group therapy

health
hyperactivity
impulse control/aggression
marital/couples therapy
minority/cross-cultural neuropsychology/rehabilitation
obsessive-compulsive disorder
personality disorders
psychodynamic/psychoanalytic therapy
psychological therapy
schizophrenia/psychoses
substance abuse
PTSD

George Washington University (Psy.D.)
Center for Professional Psychology
1922 F Street NW, Suite 103
Washington, DC 20052
Phone: 202-994-1835
E-mail: psyd@gwu.edu
Web address: www.gwu.edu/~psyd/index.htm
What About Online Programs?

- Staggering increase in # of students and advertising
- Distinguish between for-profit companies of suspect reputation and established, non-profit universities
- Our advice is to be wary:
  - APA does not accredit fully online doctoral programs (but does allow for online courses)
  - Online programs lose quality control over research mentoring and clinical supervision
  - Graduates experience difficulty with employment, internships, and licensure
  - Still too new & alternative to have a track record of producing quality psychologists
It's About the Match

- Master's and PsyD: match largely to the graduate program
- PhD: match largely to the grad professor(s)
- Determine from the website if he/she is accepting new students next year
- Perhaps email him/her (never phone) to find out about current research interests
Evaluate Your Fit

♦ How well do your interests fit with the program? (Are you interested?)
♦ How well do your credentials match with the program? (Are you competitive?)
♦ Dozens of potential considerations in determining the optimal “fit”
♦ We shall focus on 6, realizing that the list is potentially infinite
**Program Quality & Outcomes**

- Prestige and reputation
- Faculty productivity
- GREs & GPAs of the students
- Curriculum and experiences
- Department and university resources
- Graduates’ outcomes and career paths
- Accreditation for the graduate program (e.g., APA, NASP)
Quality Grad Programs

- Faculty work closely with students
- Small student/faculty ratio
- Program provides some financial assistance
- Faculty regularly publish and attend conferences
- Faculty are tenured or tenure-track
- Has relevant accreditations
- Produces leaders in the field
Outcomes for Clinical Programs

- For APA-accredited clinical & counseling programs, check websites for outcome data on:
  - Internship match rate: Seek 75% or more
  - Attrition rate: Be certain programs you are considering graduate 75% of their students
  - Licensure data: APA-accredited PhD 85% vs. 65% for non-APA-accredited programs
- Use the three-quarters rule!
Program Orientation

♦ Experimental, academic, or applied?
♦ Does it meet your particular research interests within the field?
♦ Do the graduates obtain jobs where you desire to work?
♦ For clinical/counseling psych, is it a practitioner, scientist-practitioner, or clinical scientist program?
♦ What are the predominant theoretical orientations? Psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, humanistic, systems?
Research Interests

♦ Seek research mentors who are experts in your areas of interest
♦ The more focused your search, the better your probable outcomes
♦ Consult professors’ websites, read program materials, and read their articles
♦ Discover if medical school or neuroscience facilities at your disposal
♦ Learn about the research space/labs in your area
Teaching & Clinical Opportunities

- Determine what on-campus opportunities available to you and in which year
- Contact a few of the professors you’ve been researching
- Gain information not readily available and get to know someone you’d like to work with
- Do not send formulaic letters
- Do not send multiple letters to same institution
Financial Aid

- You have a right to request information, and programs have an ethical obligation to give it.
- Annual tuition ranges from $10,000 for in-state PhD students to $40,000 for private PsyD.
- About 70% of full-time PhD students receive financial support; ≈ 12% of master’s students.
- More rigorous admission standards translate to more financial assistance.
- Investigate before you apply: Eyes wide open!
Grad Student Debt

- On top of any undergrad debt
- “Pay as you go” expectation for vast majority of PsyD and master’s students
- Loans are **not** financial assistance from programs
- Debt may be substantial: 78% of recent grads
- Median debt is $180,000 for PsyD, $50,000 for PhD
- Median starting salary of doctoral psychologists is $65,000
Quality of Life

- You will *occasionally* escape from Psych Dept...
- Having a place to escape can be important, especially if you do not have $ and family.
- Increase probability of having all you want by applying to schools you know can provide it.
- Weight applied to this consideration varies widely.
- Carefully balance the personal and the professional.
A Multitude of Considerations

- Geographic location: both the area of the country and proximity to significant others (But please consider getting out of town!)
- Gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation composition of program faculty & students
- Even if your choices are limited, make it an informed choice
Best of Success
in identifying compatible programs!
Putting It All Together

Having determined your interests and carefully examined programs on the preceding features:

♦ Compile a semi-final list (10 – 15 programs)
♦ Double-check that you are interested and competitive
♦ Avoid self-delusion; save money and frustration
♦ Run the list by a faculty mentor for feedback
♦ Finalize the smaller list
♦ Download application materials for final programs
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John C. Norcross, PhD
Thomas P. Hogan, PhD
The 12 Modules

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3. Constructing Your Time Line
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5. Facing & Conquering GREs
6. Understanding Admission Criteria and Acceptance Rates
7. Identifying Compatible Programs
8. Writing Personal Statements
9. Securing Letters of Recommendation
10. Completing Your Applications
11. Mastering Graduate Interviews
12. Making Final Decisions
Common Questions

♦ Is it important?
♦ Use same one for all applications?
♦ What should I cover?
♦ What should I *not* include?
Why So Much Anxiety?

♦ Different names
♦ Different lengths
♦ Different topics
♦ And, of course you have to compose it
♦ As opposed to transcripts, letters of recommendation, GRE scores
Samples
(Watch for changes in titles, requests)

School A: Statement of Goals

Please include a statement of approximately 1,000 - 1,500 words concerning your plans for graduate study and a professional career. Please be as specific as possible about (a) the development of your academic interest in psychology and reasons for pursuing the PhD, (b) past research experience and current research interests, (c) clinical experience (if applicable), (d) special abilities and skills (e.g., programming, assessment, neuroimaging), (e) long-term career goals, and (f) why you have chosen to apply to the University of XXXXX Department of Psychology and how your interests fit with the research program of the faculty member(s) whom you indicated on the application form.
School B

Statement of Academic Purpose

1. Describe yourself in a way that would give us more of an opportunity to know you as a person.
2. Why do you wish to study at the XXXXXX?
3. If there are any aspects of your background or experience that were not already mentioned, and that would contribute to the desired diversity of the Institution, please indicate.
4. What are your career goals and reasons for undertaking doctoral studies?
School C

Statement of Purpose: Write a personal statement that describes (1) your career goals and how they evolved, (2) research experiences and other psychology-related experiences you have had that have helped to prepare you for graduate school, and (3) research interests you would like to pursue in graduate school and why you feel XXX fits these interests. Feel free to include any additional information that you think would help us to understand your strengths as an applicant for graduate study. Suggested length 400-700 words.

Faculty Interest: Applicants may list up to five faculty members with whom they would like to work, but they are not required to do so. This section of the application is optional. However, if you are applying to the Clinical Psychology Program, please list at least one member of the Core Faculty who you believe could serve as your primary mentor.
School D

Personal and Research Statements

On the following pages, please write your Personal Statement (up to 500 words) and your Research Statement (up to 500 words) in the space provided.

PERSONAL STATEMENT (up to 500 words). Please include your reasons for pursuing a degree in psychology, including ultimate career goals:

RESEARCH STATEMENT (up to 500 words): Please include your research interests and potential faculty person(s) with whom you would like to further develop these interests.
Are These Statements Important?

♦ YES!  

♦ Let’s look at a couple of research studies:

1. Norcross et al. (2005) summarized ratings (1=low, 2=medium, 3=high) given by 601 graduate psychology departments for 9 admissions criteria

2. Keith-Speigle (1991) obtained departments’ ratings of 30 criteria for admission to Ph.D. programs
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Master's</th>
<th>Doctoral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letters of recommendation</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal statement/goals</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.63</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.81</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research experience</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRE scores</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinically related public service</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular activity</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More Research on Importance

Final Selection Criteria for Ph.D. Admissions

Rank (out of 30 items)

1. Research with publication
2. Applicant’s match to program
3. Research with presentation
4. Faculty interest in applicant
5. Clarity and focus of statement of purpose
6. RA experience
7. Writing skills in statement of purpose
And finally ...

- You can check the APA’s *Graduate Study in Psychology*
- For your particular program(s)
- See sample next
In APA Graduate Study in Psychology

Other Criteria: (importance of criteria rated low, medium, or high): GRE scores – high, research experience – high, work experience – low, extracurricular activity – low, GPA – high, letters of recommendation – high, interview – medium, statement of goals and objectives – high, undergraduate major in psychology – medium, specific undergraduate psychology courses taken – medium, Some science background is helpful for the Integrative Neuroscience program. For additional information on admission requirements, go to http://psychology.uchicago.edu.
Do Same Statement for All?

- NO!
- Customize for each program
- Examine each program’s request:
  - What points to cover
  - Format (e.g., words, pages)
- Follow those directions
Topics Commonly Requested

- Career plans
- General interest areas
- Research experiences
- Academic objectives
- Clinical experiences

- Academic background
- Motivation
- Autobiography
- Faculty of interest
- Special skills

And for PsyD, possibly funding

Customize

- The previous list showed topics *often* (not always) requested
- Not all programs will request all those items
- Cover what the program asks for!
What NOT to Include

Avoid the 3 H’s

♦ Humor – jokes, cuteness, a funny thing
♦ Hyperbole – most, always, never, worst
♦ Hard luck – terrible childhood, depression

Source: Norcross & Sayette (2016).
Damaging Personal Statements: Kisses of Death

- Altruistic personal statements
  (I just want to help everybody)
- Excessive self-disclosure
  (Being severely depressed myself…)
- Nonspecific research goals
  (I’m open to research in any area.)
- Professional inappropriateness
  (I’m broke so I thought I’d go to school.)

General Strategy

1. Identify your focus for grad study (specific)
2. Describe several of your major experiences
   Research, internships, special courses, volunteer work
3. Do one “boilerplate” with the first 2 points
4. List what each program wants in statement
5. Research program for emphases and faculty
6. Modify the boilerplate to cover 4 and 5
Why This Program?

- Most schools ask: Why us?
- Give 3-5 reasons, for example
  - Fit with program’s special features
  - Match with particular faculty members
  - Program quality/outcomes
  - Show that you know the program
- Maximum of one personal reason
  - Geography, family, etc.
- And put at end of statement
Which Faculty?

♦ Most schools ask about this, too
♦ Research the program’s website
♦ Identify 2 – 3 faculty
♦ Not just one and not all
♦ Integrate into statement of purpose

Why me?
Proofread!

- Get others to proofread
- After thoroughly vetted, if possible, get one or two faculty to react
- Remember, it’s used for writing skill, too
Submission

- Many submissions done online
  - About 80% for doctoral
  - About 50% for master’s
- Once you have final statement, for online submission, use copy-and-paste whenever possible rather than re-keying
Best of Success

in writing your personal statements!
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11. Mastering Graduate Interviews
12. Making Final Decisions
9. Securing Letters of Recommendation

Thomas P. Hogan, PhD
John C. Norcross, PhD
Letters of Recommendation

- Admission Committees seek a personal, outside look at your work from someone experienced in the field.
- Better sense of certain skills and characteristics than GPAs and GREs can provide.
- Several terms used for these people: references, recommenders, referees.
- Research demonstrates the high importance of letters.
- Program directors rate recommendations the single most important criterion in their admissions decisions.
- Yet, students routinely underestimate their value.
### Research on Importance of Letters of Recommendation

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Check for Your Programs
in APA Graduate Study in Psychology

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How Many? From Whom?

- Typically, 3 letters for grad school applications
- Most, if not all, letters should come from: faculty, academics, and researchers
- One strong letter from someone outside the academy is fine and perhaps advisable
- All referees must have earned at least the level of degree for which you are applying
- Do not send more letters than requested!
- But send 4 if allowed, if it makes *unique* contribution
Most Frequent Applicant Characteristics on Recommendation Forms

- Motivated/hardworking
- High intellectual/scholarly ability
- Research skills
- Emotional stability
- Writing skills
- Speaking skills
- Teaching potential
- Works well with others
- Creative and original
- Knowledge base
- Character or integrity
- Special skills
# Organizing the Info

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Letter or Form</th>
<th>Submission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southwestern U</td>
<td>PhD neuroscience</td>
<td>Jan 15</td>
<td>Letter &amp; form</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwestern U</td>
<td>PhD neuroscience</td>
<td>Jan 25</td>
<td>Letter &amp; form</td>
<td>Mail directly to grad school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast U</td>
<td>MS neuroscience</td>
<td>March 15</td>
<td>Form; letter optional</td>
<td>Either mail or online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Dozen Do’s

1. Do start early
   - Ask for letters at least 6 weeks before the deadline
   - Provide reference forms 4 - 6 weeks before deadline

2. Do ask the right people
Most valuable sources of recommendations (in descending order):
   - mentor with whom the applicant has done considerable work
   - the applicant’s professor, who is well-known and respected
   - an employer in a job related to the applicant’s professional goals
   - the chair of department in which the applicant is majoring
   - a professor who taught a relevant upper-division course
A Dozen Do’s

3. Do ask if the person can write you a “good letter of recommendation”
   ♦ Be assertive and specific in your request

4. Do waive your right to access the letter
   ♦ A confidential letter carries more weight

5. Do get organized
   ♦ Referee’s last impression is your request & packet of info

6. Do provide materials to improve tone and detail
   (example in handout; see Insider’s Guide figure next)
Sample Letter to Request Recomms
(from Insider’s Guide)

November 2014

Dr. Leslie Jones, Ph.D.
.... Hausman, MD 43707

Dear Dr. Jones:

Thank you for agreeing to write a letter of recommendation on my behalf. I hereby waive (or do not waive) my right to inspect the letter of recommendation written for me and sent to the designated schools of my choice. I am applying to (master’s, doctoral) programs in clinical (counseling) psychology. My earliest deadline is ______________.

Here are the courses I have taken from you.

| Fall 2012 | Abnormal Psychology | A– |
| Spring 2013 | Clinical Psychology | B+ |
| Fall 2014 | Undergraduate Research |

Here are other activities in which I have participated.

| 2013–2014 | Research Assistant |
| 2012–2014 | Vice President of Psi Chi |

My latest GRE scores were 155 Verbal, 160 Quantitative, and 5.0 Analytical Writing. My Psychology Subject Test score was 610.

(If applicable.)

In your laboratory in Fall 2013, while participating in undergraduate research, I was involved in several different activities. My responsibilities included entering participant data, conducting telephone screening interviews to determine participant eligibility, and coding several indices of social functioning during a key intervention period in the alcohol administration study. I also participated in the weekly journal club meetings.

Finally, I attach a copy of my current vitae and a list of psychology courses for any additional information that might prove useful. Please feel free to call me at 555-1212 or to e-mail me at Chris_smith@phonyemail.com. Thanks again.

Sincerely yours,

Chris Smith

Ends.
A Dozen Do’s

7. Do all of these steps in person
8. Do prepare for electronic submission of letters
9. Do provide addressed, stamped envelopes for forms to be mailed
10. Do complete the annoying information on recommendation forms (e.g., faculty addresses)
11. Do double-check everything
12. Do stay in touch with recommenders
The Don’ts

♦ Don’t publicly manifest your pitiful skills in time management
♦ Don’t blame your poor performance on others
♦ Don’t exhibit any lethal student behaviors (e.g., substance abuse, unethical behavior)
♦ Don’t ask inappropriate folks for letters (e.g., relatives, politicians, psychotherapists, pastors)
More Don’ts

♦ Don’t assume faculty remember when they had you for courses
♦ Don’t assume you’re the only one asking for letters
♦ Don’t assume faculty must write you a letter

Don’t. Just don’t.
“Kisses of Death” in Letters

- Inappropriate authors
- Undesirable personality characteristics mentioned

Kiss of Death:
Inappropriate Senders

“We once received a very positive letter of recommendation telling about the applicant’s good character and work habits. Unfortunately we couldn’t use it because it was from her mother.”
Kiss of Death:
Undesirable Personality Characters

- “Perfectionist”
- “Painfully shy”
- “Underachiever”
- “Bright, but sensitive to criticism”
- “John is learning to let others have their opinions.”
- “Not a team player”
- “Communication in English is not usually a problem.”
- “Extremely efficient when she comes to class.”
- “His personal hygiene has improved.”
“You Write Your Own Letter”

♦ Not literally, of course
♦ But your behavior largely dictates the tone and content of your letter of rec
♦ Start writing your own enthusiastic and detailed letter of recommendation now!
Best of Success

in securing letters of recommendation!
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John C. Norcross, PhD
Thomas P. Hogan, PhD
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11. Mastering Graduate Interviews
12. Making Final Decisions
10. Completing Graduate Applications

John C. Norcross, PhD
Thomas P. Hogan, PhD

American Psychological Association
University of Scranton Pennsylvania
The Application Year

- Attack the process with drive & commitment; emulate the zeal of med school applicants
- Your professional future is at stake
- An intense process requiring at least the workload of a 3-credit course
- Position yourself for a busy Fall (because you cannot wait until winter break for PhD applications)
Starting Early

- PhD & PsyD applications typically due from mid-December to mid-February
- Thus, start in summer btw junior and senior year
- Master’s apps typically due later, from mid-January to late March (a few rolling admissions)
- Thus, start in Fall of senior year; do not wait until winter break
- Inform your SOs

EARLYBIRD
How Many Programs?

- Depends on the competitiveness of the programs in relation to your credentials
- Examine the program’s accept rates & average GPAs and GREs of accepted students
- Local master’s programs: at least 4 or 5
- National doctoral programs: at least 8
- PhD clinical programs: 10 to 12 in your range
Typical Components of Grad School Application

1. application form
2. transcripts
3. GRE scores
4. application fees
5. list of psychology courses
6. curriculum vitae (CV)
7. personal statement (separate module)
8. letters of recommendation (separate module)
9. unsolicited documents
Application Form

- Each grad school has its own form; no universal or common application
- More than one-half of applications are now online (≈ 90% for PhD and ≈ 50% for master’s)
- Useful to print a copy of the application when complete (e.g., forgetting professors)
- General rules: check grammar and spelling; complete several drafts; ask faculty to review them; professional and neat as possible
But PSYCAS is Coming

- APA soft launched a new centralized application service for grad applications
- Not a common application, but a central service
- Will take several years to determine if most graduate programs will subscribe
- But it will reduce student work in submitting applications & professor work in submitting recommendations
College Transcripts

♦ Secure an unofficial copy of your transcript prior to applying and inspect it for errors
♦ Request Registrar's Office of all attended colleges mail an official copy of transcript to the grad school
♦ Cost of transcripts averages $5 - $15 per copy
♦ Submit transcript requests at least 1 month before the deadline
♦ Hold for December grades?
GRE Scores

- GRE scores electronically sent to 4 grad schools you list
- V & Q scores reported immediately to you; AW score comes later
- Scores sent to grad schools ≈ 4 weeks after the test date
- Grad programs require official ETS transmission, not a copy of your personal score report
- Additional score reports from ETS for $25 each
- ETS will "make every effort to send your score reports within 10 working days after receipt of your request"
- GRE scores can be transmitted during a 5-year period
Application Fees

- Range from $15 to $100 per program
- Average $35 for masters’ and $50 for doctoral
- Only 7% of grad schools are free apps
- Total cost of applying to 10–12 graduate schools will run $1,000 (excluding travel to interviews)
- If in dire financial need, then request fee waivers
# List of Psychology Courses

## Undergraduate Psychology Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Professor</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psych 110</td>
<td>Fundamentals of Psychology</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dr. Freud</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psych 210</td>
<td>Statistics in Behavioral Sciences</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dr. Skinner</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psych 330</td>
<td>Research Methods</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dr. Beck</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psych 330L</td>
<td>Research Methods Lab</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Dr. Rogers</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psych 390</td>
<td>Career Development Seminar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dr. Gilligan</td>
<td>current</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Curriculum Vitae

- Typically optional, but research suggests you should include it.
- Like a resume, but CVs designed for graduate schools and academic positions.
- Means academic “course of life”.
- CVs go on for several pages and don’t list objectives.
- A valuable asset: It screams professional!
- Two CV formats are presented in the Insider’s Guide and in the handouts.
Quick Tips on CVs

- Follow an established format; do not invent your own
- Customize that format: Add and remove sections to best highlight your credentials
- Never fabricate, but perhaps embellish appropriately
- Avoid any polarizing information (e.g., political parties, radical interests, religious commitments)
- List References only with person's permission
- Secure feedback on drafts from faculty mentors
Unsolicited Documents

- Materials that are not specifically requested (nor prohibited)
- Send along any publications and any conference abstracts
- CV is a prime example
- Other examples: job descriptions, additional recommendations, formal award descriptions
- Consult with your mentor to determine appropriateness
Submit the Application

- Be professional in all correspondence
- Ensure email address & voicemail are professional: conduct a web self-audit
- Remember that emails are NOT confidential!
- Send everything according to their wishes
- Assume that everyone – grad students, secretaries – are part of the admission decision
- Ensure that it was received: Take responsibility
Once All Submitted

- Take a breather and enjoy life again
- Go online and check status of applications
- Continue to save money for any interviews
- Remain in touch with those who wrote letters of recommendation
- Check regularly your email and telephone for contacts from grad programs
- And then wait...
Best of Success

in completing graduate applications!

Success.
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9. Securing Letters of Recommendation
10. Completing Your Applications
11. Mastering Graduate Interviews
12. Making Final Decisions
11. Mastering Graduate Interviews

Thomas P. Hogan, PhD
John C. Norcross, PhD
Congratulations!

- If invited for an interview, you have cleared initial hurdles (GPA, GRE, letters, etc.)
- As with anything else, two keys:
  - Advance research
  - Practice
- For PhD, #admits = about 1/2 # interviewees
Required?

- Almost all clinical/counseling PhD/PsyD programs in person or via electronic
- Some non-clinical doctoral programs
- Almost all practice-oriented master’s programs
- Some non-clinical master’s programs
- Some programs may allow telephone, skype
Possible Arrangements

- Individual vs group interviews – varies widely
  - Check on format in advance

- Almost always, you pay for travel
  - This can prove expensive & time-consuming
  - Housing may be provided

- Topics often same as personal statement
  (e.g., your goals, why this program, your research)

- Have your own questions ready
  (see Insider’s Guide handout)
Interview Strategies

- Before the Interview
- During the Interview
- After the Interview
Before the Interview I

♦ Review the school’s program and faculty
  ♦ You did so when applying, but you did so for many programs, so review the info for this program just before the interview

♦ Review your personal statement
  ♦ See which parts are especially important for this program/school

♦ Prepare your list of questions
Before the Interview II

Self-audit your “electronic persona” for professionalism

♦ Your email address & signature line?
♦ Your voicemail?
♦ Google yourself to determine online content
♦ Are posted resumes accurate and current?
♦ Check your social networking sites (pictures, profile, groups, friends’ comments)
Practice I

- Check with your school’s Career Services Office
- Many offer “mock interviews”
- If not, a friend may help
- Videotape it
- Learn what went well and what did not
Practice II

- Expunge these words from your vocabulary:
  - Like
  - You know
  - Whatever
  - Really

- Practice conversing without them
- You want to sound as if you belong in graduate school, not high school
Practice III

♦ Several useful sites for advice:
  www.quintcareers.com
  www.nextsteps.org
♦ Much of it aimed at jobs, but much overlap with grad school interviewing
♦ Much of it the same from site to site – and compatible with advice covered here
♦ But no substitute for actual, videotaped practice!
Dress For Success: Women

- Skirt suit or pant suit, dark color/muted plaid
- Simple style blouse (white, ivory, or soft color)
- A little dab of color somewhere
- Not club attire but professional attire
- Medium heels in matching color (no spikes!)
- “No distraction” hairstyle; hair out of eyes
- Light on perfume & makeup
- Clear, light nail polish (not dark)
- Pair of small earrings
Dressed for Interviews
Dress For Success: Men

- Dark two-piece suit or dress jacket
- White, light blue, or pinstriped shirt
- Contrasting tie (dark red or blue)
- Shined shoes, dark socks
- Hair trimmed, neatly groomed
- Light on cologne
- Minimal jewelry; no piercings
- Not club attire but professional attire
Dressed for Interviews
A Final Check on Dress

- Need not be expensive or new; just professional
- Try on, try out the ensemble before going
- Move around in it: sitting, standing, walking
- Subject interview outfit to a second opinion
- Wear outfit for comfort for a few hours before interview (but not so much that it gets wrinkled)

Final ✔
What About Business Casual?

- Sends mixed messages
- Some interviewers will be in business casual
- We strongly recommend that you wear a suit for interviews
- Wear business casual after you are admitted, if the norm
During the Interview

Typically 20 Minutes

- Ice breaking questions - 1 to 2 minutes
- Interviewer questions - 10 to 12 min
- Applicant questions - 3 to 4 minutes
- Closing remarks – 1 to 2 minutes
During the Interview

♦ Have questions prepared ahead of time
♦ Be aware of nonverbal behavior
♦ Turn off your cell phone - completely!
♦ Be friendly to other applicants & to staff
♦ Remember that everyone (potentially) has a voice in your admission
Good Interview Practices I

- Arrive 15 minutes early & get oriented
- Greet person in a friendly, open manner
- Stand, greet, and extend hand
- Handshake should be firm
- Answer questions in detail; cite examples
- Relate qualifications, experiences readily
- Be honest; never stretch the truth
Good Interview Practices II

- Emphasize your strong points (sell your credentials)
- Never criticize other people; be positive
- Show interest in program
- Express appreciation for the interview
- Leave with a smile and a handshake
Behavior-Based Questions

Past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior:

- Tell me about a recent situation where you had to persuade someone to accept your idea or proposal.
- Describe the biggest challenge you faced in the past year and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a work or school situation where you had to do creative problem-solving.
Answering Behavior-Based Q’s

♦ Follow the 3 S’s:
  1. Situation
  2. Skills
  3. Success

♦ Describe the **Situation**, identify the position-related **Skills** you used to handle that situation, and end your answer with a **Successful** outcome
After the Interview

Self-reflection

♦ What went well
♦ What did not go well
♦ Difficult questions

Evaluate the program

♦ Is it right for you?
♦ Fit with faculty?
♦ Financial assistance?
After the Interview

♦ Thank you letter (only 45% do so)
♦ To whom?
  ♦ Anyone you interviewed with
  ♦ Especially your target faculty
  ♦ Grad student(s) if stayed with
♦ You may write or e-mail
♦ Examples on web & in Insider’s Guide
Best of Success

in mastering your graduate interviews!
Preparing and Applying for Graduate School in Psychology: 12 Modules

John C. Norcross, PhD
Thomas P. Hogan, PhD
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The 12 Modules</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introducing the Fundamentals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reviewing Career Options in Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Constructing Your Time Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Getting the Courses, Research, and Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Facing &amp; Conquering the GREs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Understanding Admission Criteria and Acceptance Rates</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Identifying Compatible Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Writing Personal Statements</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Securing Letters of Recommendation</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Completing Your Applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Mastering Graduate Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Making Final Decisions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. Making Final Decisions

John C. Norcross, PhD
Thomas P. Hogan, PhD
Our Itinerary

- Decision timeline
- Acceptances & rejections
- Making decisions
- Reasons for selecting programs
- Financial package
- Alternate list
- What happens if not accepted?
- Alternative Plan
- Finalizing acceptances
Decision Timeline

- PhD programs begin acceptances in late Jan and must notify you of acceptances (if financial assistance) by April 1\textsuperscript{st}
- If so, you have until April 15\textsuperscript{th} to respond
- Master’s notifications of acceptance are later, vary, and sometimes are rolling admissions
- No uniform date for notification of rejections
Acceptances & Rejections

♦ If you receive an offer, gush with excitement but do not immediately accept
♦ Wait, contact them with questions, consult your mentor, and consider your options
♦ They may pressure you, but do not accept an offer if you are unsure! Do not decline prematurely
♦ If you received other offers but not from the programs that most interest you, email them
♦ Only hold 2 offers at any one time
♦ No need to worry about hurt feelings if you decline
Making Decisions

- Gather all salient information
- Prioritize your primary reasons for selecting one program over another
- Develop a decision-making grid to assist you in ranking your choices (e.g., paired-comparison ranking technique)
- Such methods allow you to view your selection criteria from multiple perspectives and to prioritize numerous criteria
### Reasons for Selecting a Grad Program

A multitude of considerations, personal & professional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reputation</th>
<th>Match with mentors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional atmosphere</td>
<td>Amount of funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of training</td>
<td>Theoretical orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of students</td>
<td>Specific training/track</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success of its graduates</td>
<td>Family/SOs in area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic location</td>
<td>Cost of program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of program</td>
<td>Amount of supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attrition rate</td>
<td>Internship match</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensure data</td>
<td>Overall “fit”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Your Particular Reasons

Many applicants will value diversity considerations, e.g., racial/ethnic, LGB, disability, international. For each, gather information before deciding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reports of students</th>
<th>Diversity of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presence of faculty allies</td>
<td>Campus atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of training</td>
<td>Research mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity on campus</td>
<td>Student organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University mission</td>
<td>University coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coursework</td>
<td>Emotional atmosphere</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*get what you need*
Top Reasons for Choosing Clinical Programs (Handout)

1. Sense of fit
2. Curriculum
3. Geographic location
4. Prestige/reputation of the university
5. Reputation of the faculty
6. Gut feeling
7. Discussions with program students
8. Theoretical diversity of the staff
9. Job placement record
Clinical Programs

- But top reasons differed markedly between those seeking Boulder-model, PhD training and those seeking Vail-model, PsyD training
  - PhD students: emphasized match with faculty, funding, availability of RA and TA opportunities
  - PsyD students: emphasized curriculum, location, gut feeling, interdisciplinary training
- For both, carefully examine the outcome data: Attrition rate, internship match, and licensure data
Financial Package

- When acceptance offer made, establish if the program is offering financial assistance.
- What does the $ package cover? (e.g., tuition remission, health insurance, guaranteed for ? years) If a TA/RA, how many hours?
- Consider tuition cost, available stipends, & living costs.
- Plan realistically about debt.
Level of Debt by PhD and PsyD for Recent Doctorates

Tuition

♦ Grad tuition largely a function of 3 variables
  ♦ institution type (private > public)
  ♦ state residence (out of state > in state tuition)
  ♦ degree level (doctoral > master’s programs)
♦ Tuition per year for master’s: $6K - $30K
♦ Tuition per year for doctoral: $10K - $40K
♦ Remember: those numbers are not total costs
Alternate List

- Ask director of admissions where you stand on list
- Be politely assertive: In typical years, what % of students with this position on alternate list receive an admission offer?
- If interested in the program, convey 3 ideas: you are keenly interested; you are available; you have not accepted another offer
- Strike a balance between aggressive and complacent inquiring by asking how often you may contact the representative
What if Not Accepted?

Depends on the reasons(s), thus

- Conduct a rigorous self-assessment of your current credentials and career goals
- Consult with mentor to identify the weaknesses and construct a remediation plan
- E.g., if low GRE scores, if applied to out-of-reach programs, if lacked experience, if recommendations were tepid
Alternative Plan

♦ Delay graduation or consider a post-bacc to retake classes and to acquire research experience
♦ Prepare more for and retake the GRE (Kaplan, Princeton prep courses)
♦ Secure more experience in research position
♦ Consult the APA Education Directorate’s Graduate Openings list in late April
♦ Take grad classes at graduate program as non-matriculated student
♦ Accept programs with lower academic requirements
Alternate Plan (continued)

- Earn a master’s degree before moving onto the doctorate (but beware “money mills”)
- Earn a master’s instead of a doctoral degree
- Apply to doctoral programs that will soon be accredited by the APA
- If research is goal, apply to doctoral programs in other fields
- If practice is goal, apply to programs in other mental health fields
- Apply again in a year or two to desired programs
Finalizing Acceptances

- Offers must be finalized in writing, although both verbal offers & verbal acceptances are binding.
- Take your time in accepting but expedite declines.
- Accept only 1 offer (an ethical matter).
- Put it in writing and express the conditions of acceptance (samples in Insider’s Guide).
- Express your appreciation to mentors and those who wrote recommendations.
- Decline any other offers ASAP.
- Celebrate!
Two Final Words

- Realism: Be realistic about your credentials, capacities, and acceptance odds
- Persistence: Many successful psychologists required two or three tries to get into a graduate program
Best of Success

in making your final decisions!
Thanks for Watching 
and best of success in graduate school!