

# DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

## Clinical Psychology Program

2011-2012

### Overview and Purpose

The Clinical Psychology Training Program at The Pennsylvania State University is one of the oldest in the country. It was first accredited in the 1940s, and consistently ranks within the top 10-15 programs in the country (e.g. Gourman Reports, the National Research Council, and U.S News and World Report). We are one of the founding members of the Academy of Psychological Clinical Science, a 42-member organization of highly selective clinical science doctoral programs whose broad mission is the advancement of clinical science. Throughout its history, the stated goal of the program has been to integrate clinical science and professional development as later articulated by the Boulder Conference. The current APA-approved program<sup>1</sup> emphasizes the study of both adult and child clinical psychology. Our clinic is one of the largest in the country, and it also contains the **Center for the Treatment of Anxiety and Depression**, an important clinical research center, and the **Families and Schools Together (FAST Track) Program**, an NIMH-funded community-based prevention research program. Additionally, the **Practice Research Network (PRN)** is run through the Psychological Clinic and is recognized as a leading model of integrating practice and research. It is the site of several studies conducted by students and faculty. The **Penn State Sports Concussion Program** and the **Penn State Personality Disorders Program** are also run through the Psychological Clinic and are recognized as models of practice and research integration.

There is a wide range of other research conducted by our faculty outside of the Psychological Clinic structure. The **Penn State Social Cognition Research Lab** explores differences in social information processing as predictors of child abuse and neglect, as well as interpersonal aggression and clinical and legal decision making. The **Development of Toddlers Study** is an NIMH-funded longitudinal study following 120 children from age 18-48 months, examining how their own skills and personalities and various aspects of their parents' lives influence the development of awareness, effectiveness, and flexibility in preschool age emotion regulation. In fact, **the study of Emotion Regulation** and related emotional processes is a research theme pursued by many of our faculty. For example, the **Parent-Infant Research Lab** studies ways in which early experiences of parental depression and marital conflict affect bio-behavioral systems of emotion regulation and how genes interact with parenting to affect developing regulatory systems. **Studies on ADHD in childhood** focus on how children with attention problems acquire new skills, and how difficulties in emotion regulation, motivational biases, self-perception, anxiety, and depression may interfere with the ability to use routine academic and social skills. **Research on PTSD** explores factors (e.g., social information biases, interpersonal factors, emotion and hormonal regulation) that might lead to psychological and physical aggression in intimate relationships. Finally, the **Culture, Health and Emotion Lab** investigates the intersections of these three forces such as how cultural and ethnic variation in emotion regulation relates to healthy psychological functioning.

There are a number of clinical **Neuroscience-Oriented Research Programs** in the Clinical area. **The Brain Plasticity Lab** explores how the brain restructures itself following brain injury or disease in humans using state of the art neuroimaging techniques, such as fMRI, to assess alterations in functional brain organization. Another clinical neuroscience-oriented research program studies the types of brain activation patterns that underlie things like anxiety and emotion regulation. Ongoing **Addictions Research** utilizes an interdisciplinary approach, merging theories about traditional behavioral addiction with work from the affective, cognitive and social neurosciences with a focus on functional brain imaging. The **Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Neuropsychology Lab** examines the intersection of emotion and cognition in patients with MS.

Our graduate students are actively involved in all of these research programs, typically playing critical roles in running experiments on research participants, analyzing research data, presenting scientific findings at national and international conferences, and writing up papers for publication. Combined with their clinical training, students are competitive for top clinical internships and often obtain jobs in academia, academic medical centers, and other research-oriented settings. Undergraduate students are also frequently involved in research, working closely with both faculty and graduate students. Many undergraduates work in research labs for several years, often working on honors theses as part of their research work.

The major overall goal of the program is to train graduate students for research-oriented careers at universities, medical schools, and settings which integrate research and evaluation along with professional services.

Consequently, there is a strong emphasis on the clinical science of psychology in our program. Our faculty believe that excellence in this domain is best provided by superior training in both the scientific methods and clinical assessment and intervention. It should be noted that those students whose career goal is full-time private practice without a significant research commitment will find our program inappropriate for their needs.

Our program is largely competence-based with a strong emphasis in research methodologies and procedures as well as training in treatment and assessment procedures. We expect individuals who have completed our Ph.D. program to be able to embark on a research-oriented career as well as successfully complete state licensure in psychology.

The clinical training at Penn State takes place in the Psychological Clinic which is operated by the Department of Psychology. Thus, clinical students are fully integrated into the department and receive their Ph.D. in psychology. The Psychological Clinic (1) serves as the principal practicum training center for clinical students, (2) supports an infrastructure to facilitate clinical research, and (3) is a community mental health center for the surrounding tri-county area, which exposes our students to training in a wide range of psychological problems in a diverse population. To foster the integration of research and clinical practice, much of the clinical supervision in our program is provided by licensed core clinical faculty.

The Clinical Program requires that: 1) Its graduate students complete a minimum of three full-time academic years of graduate study; 2) at least two of those three years be at Penn State University; 3) at least one year be in full-time residence; and 4) students complete an internship before receiving the Ph.D. degree. It is, however, normally expected that students will spend nearly all of their training time in residence and will complete all program requirements and acquire requisite scholarly and clinical skills in a timely fashion. The majority of students complete their academic work during the first five years and complete their internship in their sixth year.

### **Undergraduate Preparation**

The graduate program in the Department of Psychology presumes a background in psychology equivalent to our undergraduate major. This includes courses in psychopathology, personality theory, research methods, and statistics. Courses in physiological psychology, biopsychology, or neuropsychology are also highly recommended for students who wish to pursue a neuropsychological or psychophysiological emphasis in their training. Entering students lacking relevant background courses may be required to gain these competencies through additional course work.

### **Clinical Psychology Program: Sequence and Requirements**

The Clinical Psychology program emphasizes flexibility in attaining student academic and professional goals. Students' courses are individually established in consultation with their advisers. This flexible orientation, however, does not preclude a limited number of requirements. Students must complete a master's thesis and a doctoral dissertation (with Psychology 600 scheduled for credit), and they must pass a comprehensive examination. The examination, which usually occurs at the end of a student's third year, is based upon and follows the completion of the clinical major, breadth courses, and minor requirement. For Child Clinical students, the minor requirement involves taking a series of courses that amount to a minor specialization in developmental psychology, or a minor in the Specialization in Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience (SCAN). Adult clinical students fulfill the minor requirement by conducting a separate research project (i.e., in addition to the Masters and Dissertation) with a faculty member other than their primary advisor. The Adult student minor project should result in a high quality written product of publishable quality that is then turned in as part of the student's comprehensive examination, at the same time that written comps are provided to the committee. Adult clinical students wishing to develop a formal minor area of specialization (e.g., joint degrees in Women's Studies, minor in Health Psychology) may do so as long as the written minor project requirement is also met. The general procedure of the comprehensive examination is based on questions that have been provided to the students in advance. The adult clinical track also requires that one of the projects (master's, dissertation, minor project) conducted is one that you have designed (with the help of your mentor) and carried through to the end.

Other requirements include 6 credits in statistics, a 1-credit introductory departmental seminar in general psychology, required courses in assessment, psychopathology, personality, Cultural Psychology, and psychotherapy, several semesters of clinic practicum, and 3 credits in each of the following core areas of psychology: biological, cognitive-affective, social, and developmental.

There is no foreign language requirement in the Department of Psychology, but adequate use of English must be demonstrated.

### Clinical Major

The courses of the clinical program are listed below. Certain core courses are required, and they are noted in this list. Overall, a minimum of 20 academic course credits (23 in child clinical) must be completed for the clinical major, although most students choose to take more than the minimum number of courses. The 20-23 credits must be chosen from this list.

### II. THE CLINICAL MAJOR CURRICULUM

<b>Required Courses:</b>	
Clinical Assessment <sup>12</sup>	Psy 554
Psychopathology <sup>12</sup>	Psy 542
Research Design in Clinical Psychology <sup>12</sup>	Psy 543
Practicum in Clinical Methods (Adult Practicum) <sup>1</sup>	Psy 560
Clinical Practicum with Children (Child Practicum) <sup>2</sup>	Psy 561
Cultural Psychology <sup>12</sup>	Psy 566
Advanced Psychotherapy <sup>1</sup>	Psy 569
<b>At Least One of the Following Assessment Courses:</b>	
Child-Clinical Assessment <sup>2</sup>	Psy 577
Theory and Practicum in Clinical Assessment (Personality Assessment)	Psy 555
Neuropsychological Assessment	Psy 556
<b>Examples Of Regularly Offered Electives:</b>	
Child-Clinical Psychopathology <sup>2</sup>	Psy 575
Child-Clinical Intervention <sup>2</sup>	Psy 576
Behavior Modification	Psy 563
Seminars in Clinical Problems	Psy 540

**Note.** <sup>1</sup>Required for Adult-Clinical students. <sup>2</sup>Required for Child-Clinical students.

In addition to meeting the 20-23 credit major requirement, each clinical student enrolls for practicum experience each semester for most of the semesters during which they are in the program. The procedure for scheduling these practica is described under “The Psychological Clinic.”

### Emphasis in Adult and Child Clinical Psychology

Although all students in the clinical program are expected to develop competence in both adult and child orientations, it is required that one specialize in either adult or child clinical psychology. It is important to note that applications to these two tracks are considered separately. Prospective students must indicate on their application an interest in one of these two tracks, although students within both areas interact regularly together within the larger clinical training program. Additionally, training within either specialty is not limited to that age group alone and both research and clinical experiences with additional populations are available and encouraged.

### Adult Clinical as an Emphasis

The adult track provides integrative training in clinical research, assessment, and intervention in adults. The adult clinic is a major research center for clinically relevant empirical work in psychopathology, personality, clinical neuropsychology, psychotherapy process and outcome, and addictions, providing an ideal environment for further integration of science and practice for both our students and our faculty. Moreover, specific areas of expertise within the adult track faculty include psychotherapy process and outcome research, anxiety and affective disorders, emotion regulation, sports-related concussion, neuroscience, couples violence, personality disorders, addiction, and clinical neuropsychology. Adult track students acquire knowledge in the breadth of areas related to the study of scientific psychology, and develop core competencies in research methods and statistics, ethical and legal issues, as well as competence in and knowledge of sensitivity to individual and cultural diversity. As part of their training, adult track students are required to complete at least three independent research projects during their

graduate career: master's thesis, a 2<sup>nd</sup> research (or minor) project, and a dissertation. Some students also choose to complete the Specialization in Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience (SCAN).

### **Child Clinical as an Emphasis**

The child clinical track lies at the interface of developmental and clinical psychology, and emphasizes intervention and research with individuals ranging in age from infancy to young adulthood. Students in this track obtain specialized training in: (1) therapeutic services to children and families, including school-based consultation and comprehensive neuropsychological evaluation, and (2) research in developmental psychopathology that includes an understanding of the effects of biological, cognitive, social, emotional, family, and community contexts on childhood mental health. Specific areas of expertise in the child track faculty include infant and toddler emotional development, neuropsychology of disruptive behavior disorders, child abuse, anxiety and mood disorders, and prevention programs. In addition to the general clinical requirements, a specific three-course sequence in clinical child psychology is required (these replace other electives): Child Psychopathology, Clinical Child Intervention, and Clinical Child Assessment. As part of their training, students also choose to complete either a minor in Developmental Psychology or the Specialization in Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience (SCAN).

### **The Psychological Clinic**

All of the practicum training takes place in our Psychological Clinic, and much of the supervision in that Clinic is provided by our core faculty, creating an ideal circumstance for the modeling of, and education in, the integration of theory, empiricism, and practice. To train students in the integration of science and practice, a research infrastructure exists within the clinic to allow for considerable student- and faculty-initiated scientific research on clinically meaningful questions in a naturalistic setting. Our faculty represent the scientist-practitioner model in their daily professional lives, and are actively engaged in clinically relevant scientific research. Faculty supervisors thus serve as both excellent role models and as sources of knowledge and training that reflect that integration.

Moreover, as one of the two major service providers for the county, the Clinic exposes our students to training in a wide range of psychological problems and a diversity of clientele. The varied psychological services provided by the clinic include adult and child assessment; consultation with parents, schools, and public officials; individual and group therapy; marital and family counseling; neuropsychological assessment; psychodiagnostic testing; and community mental health consultation.

The course work designated Psychology 560 (Adult) and Psychology 561 (Child) represents graduate student clinical training in the Psychological Clinic. These courses are known as practicum teams. All clinical students take an active part in clinic functions and sign up for a clinic team nearly every semester. Each practicum team, under a faculty supervisor, consists of students from various year levels. Most training services offered by the clinic are provided through these teams in a series of graded experiences ranging in degree of difficulty of the cases and progressing from observation through interviewing, assessment, and treatment. The clinic maintains a contract for services with the Centre County Office of Mental Health/Mental Retardation. This provides clinical assistantships for several advanced students. Ample and comfortable space is available in the clinic for all scheduled activities, and the learning experiences and close faculty supervision are aided by such facilities as closed-circuit TV and audio and video recorders. The clinic's staff is made up of one full-time clinical faculty member who serves as Psychological Clinic Director and two other full-time clinical faculty members who serve as Assistant Directors. A psychiatrist is also on staff, several staff psychologists and post-docs, and two nurse practitioners.

### **Internship**

All clinical students are required, typically during their sixth year, to complete a year's internship at an approved center. Students are expected to select an internship that best fits their developing professional interests. Generally, students are placed in medical school centers, child guidance centers, psychiatric hospitals, or community clinics--some with very general comprehensive programs and others with programs tending to emphasize some particular aspect of clinical psychology.

### **Research Activities**

Two fundamental beliefs on which the clinical program rests are that clinical students must be well trained as researchers and that they should begin to develop their research interests in graduate school as soon as they can. Students are expected to become involved in a research apprenticeship with some faculty member during each

semester. Although most clinical students work with a member of the clinical faculty, they may do their research in any substantive area over the interest range of the entire faculty. In fact, students are required to conduct research with at least two faculty members over the course of their time at Penn State. With that said, most students work primarily with one faculty mentor with whom they develop a research collaboration with the goal of helping students pursue research that is publishable and contributes important new knowledge to the field of clinical psychology. Many students are authors on several research publications by the time they receive their Ph.D.'s from Penn State, making them competitive for work in academia, academic medical centers, and other research-oriented settings.

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