

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Clinical Psychology Program

2008-2009

Purpose

The Clinical Psychology Training Program at The Pennsylvania State University is one of the oldest in the country. It was one of the first accredited programs in the 1940s, and prior to that Robert Bernreuter established a psychological clinic in 1931. Throughout its history, it has been the stated goal of the program to integrate clinical science and professional development as later articulated by the Boulder Conference. It is also a founding member of the Academy of Psychological Clinical Science whose broad mission is the advancement of clinical science. The current APA-approved program¹ 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.

The major overall goal of the program is to train graduate students for research-oriented careers including 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. It is the strong belief of the faculty 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 an individual at the completion of the 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 Department of Psychology. Thus, clinical students are fully integrated into the department and receive their Ph.D. in psychology. The Department of Psychology operates the Psychological Clinic, which serves as the principal practicum training center for clinical students as well as a community mental health center for the general population in the surrounding tri-county area.

The Clinical Program requires that its graduate students complete a minimum of three full-time academic years of graduate study, that at least two of those three years be at Penn State University, that at least one year be in full-time residence, and that the student completes 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. Entering students lacking this background may be required to gain such competencies through additional course work.

Clinical Psychology Program: Sequence and Requirements

The Clinical Psychology program emphasizes flexibility in attaining student academic and professional goals. A student's program of courses is individually established in consultation with his or her adviser. This flexible orientation, however, does not preclude a limited number of requirements. Each student must complete a master's thesis and a doctoral dissertation (with Psychology 600 scheduled for credit), and (s)he 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. A minor in developmental psychology is required for child clinical students. Adult clinical students are required to conduct a second research project. Adult clinical students are also free to take additional courses in a minor area, in a

program outside the department, such as statistics, or in one of the departmental programs other than clinical; that is, cognitive, developmental, industrial/organizational, psychobiology, or social. The general procedure of the comprehensive examination is based on questions that have been provided to the students in advance.

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 fundamental 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

Required Courses:	
Clinical Assessment ¹²	Psy 554
Psychopathology ¹²	Psy 542
Research Design in Clinical Psychology ¹²	Psy 543
Practicum in Clinical Methods (Adult Practicum) ¹	Psy 560
Clinical Practicum with Children (Child Practicum) ²	Psy 561
Cultural Psychology ¹²	Psy 566
Advanced Psychotherapy ¹	Psy 569
Examples Of Regularly offered Electives:	
Child-Clinical Psychopathology ²	Psy 575
Psychopharmacology	Psy 557
Child-Clinical Assessment ²	Psy 577
Theory and Practicum in Clinical Assessment (Personality Assessment)	Psy 555
Neuropsychological Assessment	Psy 556
Seminars in Clinical Problems	Psy 540

Note. ¹These courses are required for Adult-Clinical students. ²These courses are 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 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.

Child Clinical as an Area of Emphasis

The child clinical area lies at the interface of developmental and clinical psychology with its emphasis on intervention and research with individuals ranging in age from infancy to young adulthood. Students in this area are expected to gain competence in clinical psychology and developmental psychology and to focus on specialized training in the interface of two areas: clinical services to child populations and research in

developmental psychopathology, social and emotional processes, and personality development. 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. Further, students in the child clinical areas must complete a minor in Developmental Psychology and have a minimum of three semesters of clinical practicum under the supervision of a child clinical faculty member.

Finally, it should be noted that this specialty is a broad approach utilizing individual-, parent-, family-, and school-focused interventions, along with research directed toward understanding a variety of influences on the adaptation of children and young adults.

The Psychological Clinic

The course work designated Psychology 560 (Adult) and Psychology 561 (Child) represents graduate student experience in the Psychological Clinic. The clinic is a comprehensive mental health center for the University community and for the surrounding central Pennsylvania communities. The varied psychological services rendered by the clinic include adult and child assessment; consultation with parents, schools, and public officials; individual and group therapy; child play therapy; marital and family counseling; neuropsychological assessment; psychodiagnostic testing; and community mental health consultation.

The clinic's staff is made up of three full-time psychologists and a psychiatrist. Clinical faculty also supervise the practicum cases.

The clinic serves as the principal practicum training agency in the Penn State program. All clinical students, therefore, take an active part in all of the clinic functions and sign up for a clinic team nearly every semester. Each 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. Clients referred through this contract provide students with experience in a wide range of clinical problems.

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 videotape recorders.

Internship

All clinical students are required, typically during their fifth or sixth year, to complete a year's internship at an approved center away from Penn State. Each student is expected to select an internship that best fits his or her developing professional interests. Generally, students are placed in psychiatric hospitals, medical school centers, child guidance centers, and 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 develop their research interests in graduate school as soon as they can. The student is 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 three required research projects (masters thesis, breadth or minor project, and dissertation).

As part of the introductory psychology course, informal meetings between first-year graduate students and the faculty are scheduled. These meetings allow the individual faculty member to describe his or her current research interests and provide the first-year student with an opportunity to learn which faculty member has interests most compatible with his or her own.

¹ American Psychological Association
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