

Doctor of Philosophy Psychology with a Concentration in Health Psychology (PhD)

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Doctor of Philosophy - Psychology

The Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology program is comprised of three doctoral concentrations: Health Psychology, Human Factors Psychology, and Industrial/Organizational Psychology. The program involves a blend of core training and requirements and concentration-specific training and requirements.

Overview of Topical Areas

The health psychology doctoral program emphasizes psychological theory and research as they apply to understanding how psychological, behavioral, and cultural factors contribute to physical and emotional health and illness and how these can be used to create prevention and intervention programs that improve well-being.

The general philosophy and plan of the HP psychology program at Old Dominion University is to provide graduate training consisting of four phases:

1. A core of basic courses in health psychology and related areas, acquired primarily at the master's level.
2. In-depth training in statistics, methodology, and grant and manuscript writing;
3. Research experience in a field of health psychology;
4. Completion of a dissertation representing a significant contribution to health psychology.

Admission

The graduate program in health psychology (HP) admits students at two levels: with a master's degree or with a bachelor's degree. Degrees held must be in psychology or a related field. Each applicant must submit:

1. Official scores on the General Test of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE);
2. A brief statement outlining personal goals and academic objectives;.
3. Three letters of reference, at least two of which are from former college/university teachers or research supervisors;.
4. Transcripts of all prior academic work;.
5. A sample of recent academic writing (e.g., a paper required in an undergraduate course). Applicants are encouraged to submit a writing sample.

Curriculum Requirements

Core Requirements

The Ph.D. in Psychology requires at least 84 semester hours of credit beyond the bachelor's degree or at least 48 semester hours of post-master's training. Students entering the program with a bachelor's degree must complete the first phase of the program by meeting the requirements for the master's degree in Psychology (i.e., 36 semester hours with appropriate course work). For the student with a bachelor's degree, completion of the program requires approximately four years of study. For the student who holds the master's degree upon entering the Ph.D. program, completion requires approximately three years. The student is required to complete a core of master's-level courses with at least a B average. If the GPA falls below 3.0 the student may be placed on probation or suspended from graduate study as specified in the University Catalog. Further, if the student receives a grade of C or lower,

they will also be placed on probation; a second C or worse may result in dismissal from the program.

The core courses consist of the following:

Core Courses		
PSYC 713	Research Methods in Psychology	3
PSYC 727	Analysis of Variance and Experimental Design	4
PSYC 728	Regression and Correlational Design	4
Dissertation		12
PSYC 899	Dissertation	
Total Credit Hours		23

Health Psychology Concentration

In addition to the core requirements for the PhD in Psychology, the PhD concentration in Health Psychology requires the following courses:

PSYC 745/845	Applied Psychometrics	3
PSYC 735	Health Psychology	3
PSYC 844	Program Evaluation	3
PSYC 833	Grant and Manuscript Writing	3
Select two of the following:		6
PSYC 651	Developmental Psychology	
PSYC 661	Psychopathology	
PSYC 731/831	Human Cognition	
PSYC 749/849	Social and Affective Bases of Behavior	
Total Credit Hours		18

Additional Requirements

In addition to these requirements, students must complete the following requirements:

After completing the master's degree and/or before taking the candidacy examination, students are expected to form a committee of three graduate faculty members who will serve as a guidance committee. This committee assists the student in developing a plan of study tailored to the student's needs and interests. The plan of study outlines the minimum of 48 hours of post-master's training, including:

1. Completion of one additional quantitative course (3 credits);
2. Maintenance of a strong focus in research methods and statistics; and
3. Development of a viable research program.

Candidacy Examination

Prior to admission to candidacy (i.e., the beginning of formal work on the dissertation), each student is required to pass a written and oral candidacy examination. A student must pass both the written and oral parts to pass the candidacy examination. The examination may not be reported as passed if there is more than one dissenting vote. A candidacy examination cannot be passed conditionally. A pass on the examination cannot be made contingent upon other factors such as the completion of additional course work, the preparation of extra research projects, and so on. If either part (written or oral) of the candidacy examination is failed, the faculty may permit the student to take it once more at a time mutually satisfactory but within 12 months from the date of the first examination. If either part of the examination is failed, the student may be required by the faculty to retake only that part. The student is allowed two attempts on the candidacy exam. The faculty considers a complete scheduled exam (written and oral combination) as one attempt. If the student fails the exam on two attempts, they may be asked to leave the program. There are two options for HP candidacy examination depending on the student's specialty and faculty approval:

1. Qualifying Exam:
 - a. Written questions that assess core Health Psychology topics and those relevant to research in Health Psychology, and the student's

specific area of specialization (e.g., statistics, methodology, ethics, health, mental health, public health, health discrepancies).

- b. An oral examination during which the student defends responses to the written questions.
2. Major Area Paper:
 - a. A review paper (quantitative or qualitative) or theoretical analysis of a research area designated by the student as an important area for contemporary applied psychological sciences.
 - b. The resulting paper should define the student as an expert in that area, and be of publishable quality.
 - c. The student must defend the work to the guidance committee, and submit the work for publication in a journal relevant to the student's research specialty or as a book chapter. The major area paper may be submitted as a grant proposal instead of as a journal publication or book chapter with prior approval from the guidance committee.

Research Emphasis

A major objective of the HP program is to provide the student with substantial experience in planning, designing, conducting, and reporting results of independent research. Toward this end, a student is expected to engage in a variety of research activities. This expectation is reflected in the program's few traditional classroom course requirements beyond the master's degree. The time should be spent on mostly research-related activities (e.g., reading, individual study [research], and dissertation). The student is expected to acquire research experiences that go well beyond formal course requirements. These research experiences may take a variety of forms and occur in a variety of settings. For example, the student is encouraged to engage in both laboratory and field research related to the HP sciences specialty, to serve as a member of a larger research team when appropriate or available (perhaps serving as a graduate research assistant on an externally sponsored grant), and to engage in independent non-sponsored research. The student is also encouraged to seek out opportunities to conduct research projects (including grants and contracts funded through the Old Dominion University Research Foundation) on his or her own and in collaboration with faculty members. The accumulation of these research experiences should result in presentation of papers at professional meetings, the publication of manuscripts in refereed journals, the publication of technical reports, and the submission of grant/contract proposals.

Graduate Student Teaching

Teaching a course is an experience that is worthwhile regardless of the eventual career role(s) that a student envisions, and the experience should be taken seriously for its professional value. Benefits associated with teaching a course include expanding and solidifying knowledge about general and Health psychology, polishing communication skills, and establishing professional identification. Although there are other ways to acquire these benefits (e.g., presentations at conferences, consulting experiences, organizing and conducting workshops), teaching a course systematically builds these experiences into a student's plan of study. Moreover, any student who plans an academic career should teach one or more courses in preparation for that career. The student should also recognize that during the course of graduate training, financial support is often provided by the Psychology Department from graduate teaching assistant or adjunct teaching funds. This type of financial support almost always requires that the student be partially or fully responsible for teaching a course.

Dissertation

The doctoral dissertation must represent an achievement in research and a significant contribution to knowledge in the major area of study. It is equivalent to no more than 24 semester hours of course work.

Dissertation Defense

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation is required. The aim of the defense is to explore with the candidate the methodological and substantive contributions of the completed dissertation.

Research Opportunities

HP faculty conduct research on a wide variety of health-related topics. Students have access to laboratory facilities as well as field settings in which faculty work. Research is supported by a variety of funding agencies from federal (including the National Institutes of Health) to state agencies. Students are encouraged to become engaged in one of these research programs early in the process of their education.