

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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## **ADMISSIONS**

### **Q: What is the application deadline?**

**A:** The application deadline for Fall 2010 admission is November 30, 2009. Letters of recommendation and official transcripts should be submitted, or postmarked, no later than the application deadline. Applicants should take the general test of the Graduate Record Examination and, if applicable, the Test of English as a Foreign Language no later than October 24, 2009 so that we receive the scores by the end of November 2009.

### **Q: May I apply for the Spring semester?**

**A:** No. Our department offers admission for the Fall semester only.

### **Q: Do you offer a master's degree program?**

**A:** Our department does not offer a terminal master's degree program, meaning we only admit students who intend to earn the Ph.D. degree. Students admitted to our graduate program do, however, have the option of earning the M.A. degree while working toward the Ph.D. degree.

### **Q: Do you offer a Psy.D. degree program?**

**A:** Our department does not offer a Psy.D. degree program. Our Clinical Science area offers only the Ph.D. degree and is highly focused on research.

### **Q: Do I need a bachelor's degree in psychology before I may apply to the graduate program?**

**A:** A bachelor's degree in psychology is not required for admission to our graduate program, though most of our admitted students have an undergraduate degree in psychology. Whatever your major, it is important to have a strong background related to the area of psychology to which you will apply. Degrees in a biological, cognitive, or social science are often closely related to the areas of psychology in our graduate program.

### **Q: Do I need a master's degree in psychology before I may apply to the graduate program?**

**A:** A master's degree in psychology is not required for admission to our graduate program; most of our admitted students do not enter with a master's degree. Students who enter with a master's degree in psychology start at Year One of our program, just like students with a bachelor's degree.

### **Q: Where can I take psychology courses if I have already received my undergraduate degree in a different field?**

**A:** The courses should be advanced courses, so taking courses at a 4-year institution is appropriate. You may take courses through a continuing education program or during the summer. It may be difficult to take courses during a university's regular term. Post-baccalaureate programs are another option. Online courses are not appropriate. It is essential for you to take courses which provide you with human interaction with professors and students.

**Q: Do I need research experience in psychology?**

**A:** Yes! It is essential to have laboratory or field research experience in psychology before you apply. Successful candidates have a minimum of one year of research experience, either as undergraduates or following a bachelor's degree; most have substantially more experience.

**Q: How may I get research experience?**

**A:** If you do not have laboratory or field research experience in the area (of psychology) of interest to you, then you must attain such experience before applying. To find research opportunities, review the research interests of professors in psychology departments at universities or colleges (4-year institutions) near you and then contact the specific faculty members whose research interests you, asking if have research positions (volunteer or paid) to which you may apply.

**Q: What steps should I take to become a competitive candidate?**

**A:** First, regarding courses, there are not any specific classes that you need to complete for admission to our program but we strongly recommend that you take an introductory psychology course, several advanced courses in the area to which you will apply, and a course in psychology research methods and statistics. The admissions committee seeks students who have laboratory or field research experience, a general knowledge of psychology (and their particular subfield), and the ability to conduct high-level research in that subfield. Writing a strong personal statement and having extremely good letters of recommendation are both essential. Also, it is beneficial for applicants to our Clinical Science program to have volunteer or paid clinical experience (e.g., hospital internships, suicide/crisis hotlines, educational work with children, etc.).

**Q: How competitive is the program?**

**A:** The admission rate to our graduate program from the last entering class is 5.6% (641 people applied to our program but only 36 were offered admission). Clinical Science is our most competitive area, with an admission rate of 2.9% (7 of 245 applicants were offered admission last year).

2009	Behavioral Neuroscience	Change, Plasticity, and Development	Clinical Science	Cognition, Brain, and Behavior	Social/ Personality	Department
Applications	14	41	245	127	184	611
Admission Offers	0	3	7	8	8	26
Incoming Class	0	2	7	3	4	16

2005-2009 Averages	Behavioral Neuroscience*	Change, Plasticity, and Development	Clinical Science	Cognition, Brain, and Behavior	Social/ Personality	Department
Applications	16	45	288	111	167	617
Admission Offers	0.5	5	8	11	9	34
Incoming Class	0.5	3	6	7	4	19

\* For Behavioral Neuroscience, the average is based on data from 2008-2009 and 2009-2010.

**Q: Whom should I ask for letters of recommendation? How many letters are required?**

**A:** *Letters of recommendation* should be from individuals with whom you have worked closely in an academic, clinical, research or professional setting so they can comment positively on your accomplishments, and your potential to succeed in a graduate program. We require three letters of recommendation; two of these should usually be from professors and/or research supervisors.

**Q: What is the difference between the statement of purpose and the personal history statement? What should each include?**

**A:** In your *statement of purpose*, please describe your aptitude and motivation for graduate study in your area of specialization, including your preparation for this field of study, your academic plans or research interests in your chosen area of study, and your future career goals. Please be specific. Some questions to consider are:

- What sparked your interest in psychology?
- What have been your academic achievements?
- What are your general and specific areas of research interest?
- Why would UC Berkeley be a good intellectual fit for you? You also should discuss why you are interested in your emphasis and the specific faculty members you selected.

The *personal history statement* should discuss how your personal background influences your decision to pursue a graduate degree in psychology. Please include information on how you have overcome barriers faced by others, evidence of your academic service to advance equitable access to higher education for women, racial minorities, and individuals from other groups that have been historically underrepresented in higher education, evidence of your research focusing on underserved populations or related issues of inequality, or evidence of your leadership among such groups. Some questions to consider are:

- What hardships have you overcome?
- What have been your successes?
- What obstacles came up? Show how you persevered.
- How did you become interested in psychology?
- Were you in some way different from the majority of students in your class?
- Was your family supportive in your decision to choose psychology as a career field?
- Were you influenced by your parents' education and career?

- Were you in a single parent family?
- Was much of your time spent taking care of your siblings?
- Did you work while going to school?
- Is psychology a common career field for people of your cultural background?

An example of a personal history statement is available at.  
<http://ls.berkeley.edu/soc/diversity/apply/personalstatement1.html>

**Q: Is it okay if I contact faculty persons regarding admission?**

**A:** Applicants may contact faculty persons with whom they wish to do research before they apply, via e-mail. This serves a dual purpose. It informs the faculty member of your interest in the faculty member’s research and may inform you whether the faculty member is accepting students.

**Q: I studied abroad. Do I need to submit transcripts from the host university?**

**A:** In some cases, the transcript of the home university only contains credits/units from the host university. In these cases, you **do need** to submit the transcript from the host university. You do not need to submit the transcript from the host university in cases where the credits/units, grades, course names and course numbers appear on your home university’s transcript.

**GRE & TOEFL**

**Q: Do I need to take the GRE? Is there a score requirement for the GRE?**

**A:** We require all applicants to take the GRE general test. **The GRE psychology subject test is not required.** We do not have a score requirement for the GRE. Most applicants score in the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher.

**Q: What are the average GRE scores?**

**A:** The average GRE scores for our most recent entering class, by area, are as follows:

2009	Behavioral Neuroscience	Change, Plasticity, and Development	Clinical Science	Cognition, Brain, and Behavior	Social/ Personality	Dept.
Verbal	N/A	640	704	690	680	676
Quant.	N/A	667	721	760	733	719
Analytical Writing	N/A	5.0	4.8	5.2	5.3	5.0

2005-2009 Averages	Behavioral Neuroscience	Change, Plasticity, and Development	Clinical Science	Cognition, Brain, and Behavior	Social/ Personality	Dept.
Verbal	N/A	625	645	628	645	635
Quant.	N/A	712	711	728	728	718
Analytical Writing	N/A	4.8	5.1	5.2	5.2	5.1

**Q: If I take the GRE general test multiple times, which scores will be evaluated?**

**A:** Each admissions committee conducts a comprehensive review of each applicant's file, and considers all GRE scores, paying particular attention to the highest scores for the verbal and quantitative sections.

**Q: What are the GRE codes?**

**A:** The institution code for UC Berkeley is 4833. The Educational Testing Service sends scores electronically to UC Berkeley, in which case the department/major code is not necessary. Score reports sent by mail need the department/major code of 2016.

**Q: Who is required to take the TOEFL? Is there an exemption to this requirement?**

**A:** Applicants from countries or regions in which the official language is not English are required to submit official evidence of English language proficiency. This requirement applies to applicants from Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Latin America, the Middle East, Israel, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, most European countries, Quebec, and non-English-speaking countries in Africa. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is the most common way to demonstrate English language proficiency.

If an applicant from one of the above countries/regions has spent one year as a full-time student at a university in an English speaking country (and was not studying a language) and earned an average grade of B- or higher, then the student is exempt from taking a standardized test; two official transcripts from that university will need to be submitted instead.

**Q: What are the TOEFL codes?**

**A:** The institution code for UC Berkeley is 4833. The Educational Testing Service sends scores electronically to UC Berkeley so the department/major code is not necessary.

**GRADE POINT AVERAGE**

**Q: The application requests four undergraduate grade point averages: cumulative GPA, GPA after the first two years, major GPA, and upper division GPA. Do I need to calculate all four grade point averages?**

**A:** Yes, you need to calculate all four undergraduate grade point averages.

**Q: What are upper division courses? Are upper division courses different from courses taken after the first two years?**

**A:** Upper division courses are courses designed for junior and senior undergraduate students. Many universities distinguish course levels by course numbers. (The course catalog of the university may address this distinction.) Upper division courses are not necessarily the same as courses taken after the first two years. Upper division courses may be taken by freshmen and sophomore students; juniors and seniors may take courses designed for freshmen and sophomores.

**Q: Which courses are considered major courses?**

**A:** Major courses are courses you have completed or will complete to satisfy a requirement for your major.

**Q: What are the average grade point averages?**

**A:** The average undergraduate cumulative grade point averages for our most recent entering class, by area, are as follows:

2009	Behavioral Neuroscience	Change, Plasticity, and Development	Clinical Science	Cognition, Brain, and Behavior	Social/ Personality	Dept.
Cumulative GPA	N/A	3.33	3.57	3.33	3.86	3.58

2005-2009 Averages	Behavioral Neuroscience	Change, Plasticity, and Development	Clinical Science	Cognition, Brain, and Behavior	Social/ Personality	Dept.
Cumulative GPA	3.73	3.63	3.67	3.55	3.79	3.64

**DEGREE**

**Q: How long is the program?**

**A:** Our graduate program is a 5-year program. Students typically complete the program in 4, 5, or 6 years. We guarantee funding for 5 years.

**Q: What areas of specialization does the department offer?**

**A:** Students may specialize in one of the following areas:

- Behavioral Neuroscience
- Change, Plasticity, and Development
- Clinical Science
- Cognition, Brain, and Behavior
- Social/Personality

Information about each of these areas is available at <http://psychology.berkeley.edu/graduate/index.html>.

The department does not offer programs in criminal or forensic psychology, counseling psychology, or school psychology. (UC Berkeley’s Graduate School of Education does have a School Psychology program, but this is completely separate from the Department of Psychology.) Information about programs in these areas is available at the American Psychological Association web site <http://www.apa.org/> and at <http://www.apa.org/about/division.html>. We also do not offer a Psy.D. degree program or any joint or concurrent degree programs.

**Q: Is the Ph.D. program accredited by the American Psychological Association?**

**A:** Our Clinical Science program is accredited by the APA. The APA does not accredit programs in the other areas of our department.

**Q: If I have earned a Master's degree in psychology before I begin the graduate program, may I enter with advanced standing?**

**A:** No. University policy prohibits students entering Ph.D. programs to transfer credit. Whether a student enters with a master's degree or with a bachelor's degree, the student will begin at Year One of our program.

**Q: How many units must a student complete in order to graduate?**

**A:** There is not a unit requirement for degree completion. Progress in the program is measured by milestones: qualifying examination, advancement to candidacy, dissertation proposal meeting, filing of the dissertation, and graduation. The standard timeline for completion is as follows:

- QE by end of 6<sup>th</sup> semester
- Advancement to candidacy by end of 7<sup>th</sup> semester
- Dissertation proposal meeting by end of 8<sup>th</sup> semester
- Filing of the dissertation and graduation by end of 10<sup>th</sup> semester

**Q: Will I be able to do research with professors in different areas of the department?**

**A:** Yes. Many students work with professors from more than one area within the department. Our students also collaborate with professors of other departments/schools/institutes, such as Neuroscience, Integrative Biology, Education, Social Welfare, Sociology, Business, Public Health, Public Policy, Music, and Computer Science.

### **CAREER & LICENSURE OPPORTUNITIES**

**Q: What careers are open to graduates of the Ph.D. program?**

**A:** Many careers are open to graduates of our program. Most graduates attain jobs in academia as professors or researchers. Others may work in the medical field, in the corporate world, or for government agencies. Others may be self-employed as consultants.

**Q: Can I obtain licensure by completing the Clinical Science program?**

**A:** Our Clinical Science graduate program provides training in clinical psychology. Completion of our program (or any program) does not automatically guarantee licensure. For information about the requirements and procedures to become licensed as a psychologist in California, please visit the California Board of Psychology Web site (<http://www.psychboard.ca.gov/>). Requirements for licensure may vary from state to state. For requirements in other states, please contact the board of psychology, or equivalent agency, of each state in which you want to be licensed.

### **FUNDING & RESIDENCY**

**Q: What types of funding do you offer?**

**A:** We guarantee 10 semesters of Graduate Student Instructor (GSI; teaching assistant) support. Our department also has 5 or 6 semester fellowships available for first-year students. Faculty members may have Graduate Student Researcher (GSR; research assistant) support available to students in their laboratories as well. The GSI and GSR appointments are for one semester or one year, provide a monthly stipend, and cover approximately 90% of fees excluding the non-resident tuition fee.

The department guarantees to pay the non-resident tuition for students in their first year. By the start of the second year, U.S. citizens and U.S. permanent residents must establish California residency for tuition purposes. After the first year, out-of-state students are responsible for paying their own non-resident tuition. Prior to admissions, international students must provide documentation that they have guaranteed funding to cover the non-resident tuition for the length of our graduate program, up through advancement to candidacy.

**Q: Is it more expensive for international students than for U.S. citizens and U.S. permanent residents?**

**A:** Yes. The reason is that international students are responsible for paying non-resident tuition (NRT) after the first year. International students who have advanced to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree are eligible to receive a waiver of the NRT for no more than three years. After three years of the NRT waiver, international students will again be responsible for paying the NRT.

**Q: What funding is available to international students?**

**A:** Most financial aid from the University is only available to U.S. citizens and U.S. permanent residents. International students are eligible to hold teaching and/or research positions, however.

**Q: How can I establish California residency for tuition purposes?**

**A:** Students must meet a number of requirements before the University will classify students as California residents for tuition purposes. The Residence Deputy in the Office of the Registrar reviews requests to establish California residency for tuition purposes and makes the official determination of student's residency. For residency process information and specific residency requirements, visit <http://registrar.berkeley.edu/Residency/legalinfo.html> or contact the Office of the Registrar at (510) 642-5990. The essential point is that the process of establishing residency must begin as soon as the student arrives in California.

## **HOUSING**

**Q: Does the University offer housing for graduate students?**

**A:** The University has housing available for graduate students. There are residences for single students and for students with families. Information about University housing and housing alternatives is available at <http://www.housing.berkeley.edu/livingatcal/graduatestudents.html>.

**Q: Are other housing options available?**

**A:** Off campus and group housing are other options. The staff of Cal Rentals can assist you with your search. More information is available at <https://calrentals.housing.berkeley.edu/>.