

STUDENT HANDBOOK
FOR THE
APPLIED MASTER'S PROGRAM IN PSYCHOLOGY

Department of Psychology and Special Education
Texas A&M University-Commerce

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Revised October
2017

The faculty of the Department of Psychology and Special Education welcomes you to graduate study in the Applied Master's Program in Psychology at Texas A&M University-Commerce. We are pleased that you have decided to come here for your graduate work. While all of us will assist you to the greatest possible extent, you must assume primary responsibility for the smooth functioning of your graduate education. Among the major resources available for you here are the faculty, fellow graduate students, libraries, courses and seminars, and related organizations such as schools, hospitals, clinics, and professional organizations. If you use these resources well, and work diligently, your graduate education can be excellent. We are currently one of only two nationally accredited master's program in the state of Texas in clinical or applied psychology.

The master's program in applied psychology at Texas A&M University – Commerce is designed to provide qualified students with sufficient training in the science and craft of clinical psychology and related fields, so that graduates can successfully sit for the state examination to become a licensed Psychological Associate in Texas. Based on the Boulder model, students graduate as “scientist-practitioners,” with a wide range of clinical skills and the capability of conducting independent research in applied fields. Concluding with nine semester hours of practicum experience where they work with a variety of clients with different problems and issues, as well as writing a master's thesis or conducting a similar research project, graduates typically find work in public or private mental health facilities, human resources settings, clinical research laboratories, and similar venues. Training emphasizes both psychological assessment and psychotherapy.

The single most important faculty member for you, especially in the early part of your graduate work, is your program advisor. This individual is your primary resource and is responsible for assisting you with the paper work necessary for the orderly administration of the graduate program. Your initial faculty advisor will be the Coordinator of the Applied Master's Program, but other members of the clinical faculty may eventually assume that role. It is essential that you visit with the coordinator of the Applied Master's Program at your earliest convenience.

There are a number of rules, regulations, and procedures applicable to graduate study. To the extent that you take time to become informed about these, you will experience fewer frustrations. Please save this handbook and consult it often. In addition to the information herein, you should become well acquainted with all of the rules and regulations contained in the current Graduate Catalog.

Students admitted to the Applied Master's Program must to exhibit the highest level of ethical behavior in both their classroom experiences as well as their clinical training. Breaches of ethical behavior can result in immediate removal from the Applied Program. Examples of such behaviors would be plagiarism or breach of confidentiality.

Additionally, students in clinical training must provide services in a professional manner as directed by their clinical supervisors. Failing to meet the standards of professionalism required to provide safe and ethical psychological services to the public may result in your dismissal from the program or the clinical practicum (691). Examples of such behavior would be failing to follow the direction of the clinical supervisor in client care and evaluation, or behavior that would suggest that the student may not be appropriate for providing psychological services to the public.

The main offices of the department are in Binnion Hall, Room 201 and 203. Faculty names are above their doors, most of which and are located throughout the second floor of Henderson Hall, with but a few also in the adjacent Binnion Hall. Mail boxes for faculty and graduate assistants are located in Binnion 207.

As you proceed with your studies here, your record file (kept by the departmental Administrative Assistant designated to help with our program) should reflect all decisions regarding your program. You should ascertain that each important decision is recorded in writing, with your program advisor's signature, and that the written record is in your file. The official file is in the Graduate Office in the McDowell Administration Building. The maintenance and integrity of these files are the responsibility of the graduate student, with the cooperation of the program advisor. Your grades and copies of official forms will go into your record file automatically.

It is your responsibility to maintain contact with the Graduate Office, the Department Head, and coordinator of the Applied Masters Program regarding progress toward your degree. We will send information to the email and regular mail address you have given us. If you move or change your email address, it is your responsibility to make sure we have the updated addresses. You may miss information on meetings, courses, and even your comprehensive exam results if we do not have current addresses. It is also your responsibility to read carefully the requirements in the Graduate Catalog concerning the degree to which you aspire. Questions regarding program requirements should be directed to the coordinator of the Applied Master's Program or your program advisor.

The faculty in the Department of Psychology and Special Education working with the applied program adheres to the APA Ethical Standards of Psychologists, and we assume that you will become familiar with those standards and conduct yourself in accordance with them at all times. Failure to conform to these standards can lead to disciplinary action determined by a committee of the department's graduate faculty (the Review and Dismissal Committee).

At the beginning of each semester students should also inform the department, in WRITING, of CHANGES OF ADDRESS, TELEPHONE NUMBER, EMAIL, etc. Make sure that you provide such changes in writing to the department's Administrative Assistant designated to work with our program. Do this promptly so that we will be able to contact you in an emergency.

THE APPLIED MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM IN PSYCHOLOGY

The Applied Master's program in psychology is oriented to providing students with an understanding of the scientific principles of psychology and skills in application of those principles in the mental health field. It is one of three master's programs in psychology offered by the department. The other two are the School Psychology specialist program, which focuses on working with children and adolescents in school settings and the Master's Program in Applied Educational Psychology (Cognition) which prepares its students in the area of human learning, instructional design, and related research.

The Applied Master's degree program prepares students to meet the requirements for licensure as a psychological associate by the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists. Licensed psychological associates are employed in a variety of governmental and private organizations, such as mental health centers, clinics, and hospitals. They typically provide assessment and diagnostic services, carry out intake interviews and evaluations, and often are involved in case management and treatment planning and implementation. In private practice, licensed psychological associate works under the supervision of a licensed psychologists in providing services to clients. Current rule changes from the Board permit licensed psychological associates to become independent practitioners, following a period supervised postgraduate practice.

Based on the standards of training of the Masters in Psychology and Counseling Accreditation the Council (MPCAC), the program's curriculum derives from the Boulder Model of training for graduate psychology, also known as the scientist-practitioner model. The curriculum is organized around a basic core of general theoretical psychology and methodology overlaid with a

concentration of theory and principles of application, supervised experiences, and ethical and professional standards appropriate to the mental health field. We also strongly encourage you to work in a serious research setting during the course of your training.

The program emphasizes that the principles which guide the thinking and work of applied psychologists derive from empirical knowledge derived from scientific enterprise. Recognizing that scientific presuppositions in psychology vary considerably among workers, the department has declined to embrace any particular view and accepts as potentially valid and useful the findings of many psychological scientists, so long as they represent empirical inferences based on articulable methodologies. Thus, the conclusions of such divergent positions as traditional and cognitive behaviorism, trait-factor and other statistically based approaches, and psychodynamic psychology may all find their way into the program. The result in practice should be the development of a technical eclecticism, against which students are encouraged to derive for themselves a coherent and consistent theoretical model of psychological functioning and practice.

Oversight of the Applied Master's Program is the responsibility of the Applied Master's Committee chaired by the coordinator of the Applied Master's program. The committee includes members of the faculty who are licensed clinical psychologists, and who are intimately involved in the program's teaching and training activities. Faculty members from closely related fields (e.g., counseling, behavioral analysis) may also serve on the committee. Among other functions, the committee evaluates applications for admission to the program, participates in continued program and curriculum development, and tracks student development and progress.

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

The entrance requirements for the Applied Master's Program in Psychology include the following undergraduate prerequisites:

- a. A bachelor's degree in psychology from an approved institution or an introduction statistics course.
- b. Applicants must meet the general university requirements for admission to the Graduate School.
- c. Applicants must have a grade point average of at least "B" (3.00) in all advanced psychology courses completed.

In addition, the following are required:

- a. Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Applicants must submit scores for the quantitative, verbal and writing sections of the GRE. There are no minimum scores required for consideration, though the admissions committee reviews GRE with other data in determining to interview or admit a prospective student to the program. Undergraduate students who plan to apply for graduate training should arrange to take the GRE early in their senior year.
- b. Three letters of reference, including one from the last employer if the applicant has professional experience in the mental health field, and at least one from a tenured professor at the bachelor's degree granting institution.
- c. A brief statement of professional goals, including a description of how the student anticipates the program will facilitate attaining those goals.
- d. Approval of the Applied Master's Committee, representing both the applied program and the graduate faculty in the Department of Psychology and Special Education.

PROGRAM ADVISOR

Upon admission to the program, the coordinator of the Applied Psychology master's program

serves as the student's program advisor, who in turn may assign another program advisor from among the clinical psychologists associated with the program. Students who are admitted to graduate study by the Graduate School, but have not yet been admitted to the Applied Master's program, will be advised by the Coordinator until such time as they are admitted. The program advisor assists students in planning their program of study, and students should consult with their program advisors about program details as needed.

**APPLIED MASTER'S PROGRAM CORE, ALLIED, & SUPPORT FACULTY
AND THEIR AREAS OF INTEREST**

Amir Abbassi, PhD – Marriage and family therapy

Stephen Armstrong, PhD – Play and sand tray therapy, developmental processes in counseling

Linda Hawkins Ball, EdD – Marriage and family therapy, general mental health counseling, professional ethics, spirituality and psychotherapy

Steven E Ball, PhD – Developmental clinical psychology, theory of mind, object relations, Rorschach analysis, psychopharmacology, psychodynamic models, assessment

Curt Carlson PhD – Cognitive psychology, eyewitness memory and decision-making

Maria Carlson PhD – Quantitative psychology, application of psychometric theory to test construction and evaluation

Kelly Carrero, PhD – Emotional disturbance in children and adolescents, applied behavior analysis

Hsun-Yu Chan, PhD – Developmental and educational psychology

Raymond Green PhD – Social/industrial psychology, study of the teaching of psychology

DeMarquis Hayes, PhD – School psychology, assessment, micro-aggression

Tracy B. Henley, PhD, Department Head – Cognitive psychology, projective assessment, games and game theory, theory of mind

Brittany Hott, PhD – Single subjects designs, behavioral intervention with children and adolescents

Lacy Krueger, PhD – Cognitive psychology, metamemory, lifespan development, gerontology

Sean Lauderdale, PhD – Clinical psychology, assessment, cognitive behavior therapy, psychopharmacology, geriatric psychology

Shulan Lu, PhD – Cognitive psychology, embodied cognition

William G. Masten, PhD – School psychology, assessment of bilingual students, multicultural psychology

Benton Pierce, PhD – Cognitive psychology, memory, risky behavior

Stephen Reysen, PhD – Social psychology, issues of identity

Chester Robinson, PhD – Career counseling

Jennifer Schroeder, PhD – School psychology, mental health issues in schools and systems-level interventions, cultural effects on psychoeducational assessment, computer applications in education

Kevin Snow, PhD – Counseling pedagogy & supervision, spirituality in counseling

Karin Tochkov, PhD – Clinical psychology, gambling and risk

ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY FOR THE MASTER'S DEGREE

Enrollment in a graduate course or admission to Graduate School does not assure admission to candidacy for a graduate degree. Admission to candidacy may take place when the student achieves the following criteria:

- a. Has completed all requirements for full admission to the Graduate School, including prerequisite course requirements.
- b. Has been accepted for admission to the Applied Master's program in psychology.
- c. Agreement by a simple majority of the psychology, counseling, and special education faculty that the student is personally adequate to assume the role of a professional psychologist at the master's level. The Department will require a written and/or oral qualifying examination before granting approval. A student's minor department may also require an examination before granting approval. A student who fails one or more examinations may take them a second time only with special approval of the major and/or minor departments.
- d. Has achieved the grade point average necessary for candidacy before the beginning of the last semester or summer session prior to graduation. Those failing to meet this requirement must fulfill this requirement by enrolling and satisfactorily completing, at least one graduate course during a semester or summer term.

CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

Curriculum requirements for the degree are 63 semester hours. The current degree plan is at the end of this document, with a recommended sequence of courses. You may choose to satisfy the research requirement either by the non-thesis route PSY/SPED/COUN 595 Research Literature and Techniques (3sh) or PSY 518 Thesis (6sh). Most students, especially if they intend to work toward a doctoral degree in psychology in the future, choose the thesis option unless there are unusual circumstances which make this untenable.

Supervised experience. In accordance with the requirements for licensure as a psychological associate by the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists, students and MPCAC must complete 600 clock hours of work experience supervised by a member of the faculty who is a licensed psychologist. Supervision typically occurs as a part of the student's experiences within the Community Counseling and Psychology Clinic, when registered for PSY 691 Practicum in Psychology. Students register for nine semester hours over three semesters. Credit for each three semester hours requires the student to work 200 clock hours successfully in the clinic, including 80 hours of direct contact with clients, their families, or other professionals connected to clients.

The Community Counseling and Psychology Clinic is a joint project of the faculties of psychology and counseling. The clinic offers psychological testing, psychotherapy, and counseling to the public provided by graduate student clinicians. Services are offered on a sliding fee basis. Clients seeking services represent a broad range of ages, psychological diagnoses, and needs. Funds

generated are used to maintain the testing materials and equipment used by the clinic.

COURSE OFFERINGS

Courses are offered according to a planned schedule which allows most students to complete the program within a two year cycle. Courses are offered in Commerce, with a few also being offered off-campus Mesquite and McKinney, Texas, Dallas suburbs, approximately 65 and 50 miles respectively from Commerce. Courses with the distance education (DE) designation are offered via remote television at several sites, as well as in Commerce. Generally, the instructor originates the signal either from Commerce or the Mesquite facility, with students having the flexibility of attending at any of several sites. Usually, these courses also involve extensive correspondence between the instructor and students via e-mail.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

Our comprehensive exams are organized into four 3-hour exams, distributed over two days, three hours each morning and afternoon. The examinations are entirely essay questions, and, on the Process and Person exams, they are organized in such a way that you have to answer at least one question from each of the three or four areas that each section taps. Each of these two sections represents several distinct areas, each of which we will test you over. The Process exam entails ethics, psychometrics, social psychology, and neuropsychology; and the Person exam includes personality, psychopathology, and life span development. For each area you will have two or more questions from which you must choose one to answer.

The organization of the Assessment and Intervention exams is somewhat different, since, in one sense, they each represent a single broad area. Notwithstanding, these exams are organized in a similar fashion to those for Process and Person, in that they are divided into clusters of one or more questions, and from each cluster you must choose one or more questions to answer. Obviously, if there is but a single question in a cluster, then you must answer it and it represents a rather important component of either assessment or intervention.

The Assessment exam includes all phases of psychological assessment, and (always as an option) applied behavioral analysis. Inasmuch as Cattell-Horn-Carroll models of cognitive ability based on factor analysis are prevalent in psychological assessment (cognitive and neuropsychological assessment), you will almost certainly (at least for a while) have to write a response to a question in which you demonstrate both your theoretical and practical understanding of that model *and* the related cross-battery assessment. (Note that CHC theory is not the same as cross-battery assessment.) You will also be liable for knowing about and using with intentionality any number of assessment procedures that you have learned in your clinical courses or practicum. Perhaps of greatest importance, you will need to be able to articulate your own empirically valid strategy for psychological assessment in general, and in relationship to specific issues or referral questions that might present themselves in a practice as a master's level applied/clinical psychologist. Sometimes such questions will require you to integrate other materials into the answer. These could, for example, include an understanding of developmental processes, relevant ethical issues, diagnostic considerations, etc. As you know, the field you have chosen is not divided into distinct and unrelated plots of information, and the exam in this area may well require an understanding of the interrelated nature of all the content you should know.

The Intervention exam includes individual psychotherapy, family & couples therapy, group therapy, behavioral intervention, and consultation. Again, you should be able to articulate and use an evidence based model of psychotherapy, counseling, applied behavioral analysis, and/or consultation on this exam. An understanding of other content areas (e.g., ethics, abnormal psychology, assessment, etc.), with an ability to integrate it into educational or treatment planning,

will also be necessary.

THESIS OPTION

We encourage you to write a thesis. The thesis allows you to explore in depth an area of your own interest. Additionally, students who opt to apply for doctoral programs in the future should probably do a thesis in order to demonstrate their research abilities. The thesis is a written report of a research (experimental, applied "action," or survey) project carried out by the student under supervision of the thesis committee. It is intended to be a demonstration of your understanding of and skills in research, and a demonstration of an in-depth knowledge of a relevant area of psychology. During the first semester of study, the student should begin to consider topics and discuss these with the coordinator of the Applied Psychology program or pother advisor. The project should be in at least the advanced stage of planning by the end of the student's second semester of graduate study.

THESIS ADVISOR

Having chosen an area of study, the student should recruit a thesis advisor from among the faculty in psychology (or a closely related area), who has time and an interest in the project. The student and the thesis advisor will then select a thesis committee which will consist of the thesis advisor, and two additional members of the faculty. The thesis advisor serves as the chair of the thesis committee. Once the thesis committee is formed, the student should advise the program advisor, providing names of the committee members to be recorded in the student file in the departmental office. All members of the departmental faculty are *ex officio* members of every thesis committee.

With the help of the thesis advisor, the student prepares a proposal for the thesis using the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. You will also need to check the Graduate School web page to find current requirements for the thesis. When the proposal meets the approval of the Thesis Advisor and the committee, you will provide a copy of to *all* departmental members of the faculty by email and a single hard copy for the department office. After you have distributed the thesis proposal, you and your committee will schedule a proposal defense meeting about two weeks later. The committee with input from other interested faculty will assess the proposal and decide whether the project, as described in the proposal, will be an acceptable thesis, and whether you are prepared to carry it out adequately. Following the presentation of a written confirmation of the committee's acceptance of the thesis proposal to the department head, with the help of your thesis advisor, you will then schedule a date and time to present the proposal before the graduate faculty of the department.

Prior to the proposal meeting the Institutional Review Board must begin to review the proposal for eventual approval. (The IRB is mercurial at best, and these rules change in small ways on a regular basis. You should review current regulations before beginning a thesis project.)

On or before the day of the proposal meeting, the student must print the Form for Approval of Master's Thesis Plan which is available on line from the Graduate School on their website. The student must be admitted to candidacy before defending the proposal.

Oral Defense Examination. Once the data have been collected and the final draft of the thesis completed it shall be presented to the thesis committee for corrections and eventual approval. Written confirmation of the committee's approval will go to the department head before a date is set for the thesis defense. One week prior to the defense, the student will provide one paper copy of the thesis to each member the thesis committee, as well as to the department head and the departmental office for the perusal of the departmental faculty one week prior to the defense date. You must

make a copy of your thesis available to the faculty as a whole by email one week prior to the defense. The student will provide a hard copy for any faculty member who requests one in writing (e.g., email).

The defense of the thesis is *de facto* an oral exam over its content and the research it is based on. Questions may cover any material pertaining to the thesis, as well as the student's program of study.

NON-THESIS OPTION

Students who decide to complete the non-thesis option must take PSY/SPED/COUN 595. This course requires the completion of a major research paper. This option may limit future educational opportunities, but for some students it is a good choice. You should take this course after consulting with the program advisor.

RECOMMENDED COURSE SEQUENCE

	Fall		Spring		Summer	
Plan						
Year 1	Psy 572 Psy 503 Psy 538		Psy 508 Psy 545 Psy 573		Psy 537 Psy 575	
Year 2	Psy 527 Psy 592 Psy 502	Apply for Psy 691	Psy 520 Psy 612 or Elective		Elective Psy 691	
Year 3	Psy 507 Psy 691		Psy 518 or 595 Psy 691		Elective Psy 518	

DEGREE PLAN

		Grade	Sem/Year
Core Classes (21 Hours)			
PSY 502	Theories of Personality		
PSY 503	Advanced Abnormal Psychology		
PSY 507	Pharmacotherapy		
PSY 527	Advanced Social Psychology		
PSY 545 or Coun 545	Developmental Psychology		
Psy 520	Cognitive Behavior Therapy In Clinical Practice		
PSY 538	Ethics and Risk Management		
Emphasis Courses (27 Hours)			
PSY 508	Theories and Techniques of Applied Psychology		
PSY 537	Advanced Therapeutic Intervention		
PSY 572	Foundations of Psychological Assessment		
PSY 573	Intellectual Assessment		
PSY 575	Personality Assessment		
PSY 592 or COUN 528	Group Psychotherapy or COUN 528 Introduction to Group Dynamics and Procedure		
PSY 691 ⁹	Clinical Practicum in Psychology (must pass comprehensive examinations before enrolling for second & third semester)		
Research Methods Courses Thesis Option (9 Hours)			
PSY 612	Psychological and Educational Statistics (may be waived with consent of advisor if student has passed an introductory statistics class, must be replaced with an approved elective)		
Psy 518 ⁶	Thesis		
Research Methods Courses Non-Thesis Option* (6 Hours)			
PSY 612	Psychological and Educational Statistics (may be waived with consent of advisor if student has passed an introductory statistics class, must be replaced with an approved elective)		
PSY 595	Research Lit & Techniques		
*Non Thesis students will need to take 9 hours of electives			
Elective Courses (6-9 Hours) Additional appropriate courses with approval			
PSY 515	Neuromechanisms/Biological Bases of Behavior		
PSY 589 ³	Special Topics in Psychology (must be approved by program advisor)		
PSY 605	Single Subject Designs		
PSY 630	Rorschach and Projectives		
COUN 512	Career Development		
COUN 539	Introduction to Play Therapy		
COUN 611	Introduction to Marriage and Family Counseling		