PSYCHOLOGY, M.A.

The Department of Psychology has fostered excellence in research and scholarship for more than 100 years. The department provides graduate students with the best available training to prepare them for a variety of professional careers in academic, clinical, research, and other settings. Emphasis is on both extensive academic training in general psychology and intensive research training in the student's area of concentration.

The department expects students to become creative scientists and to exhibit an early and continuing commitment to research and scholarship. All students initiate a first-year research project and present the results to the entire department in the fall of the second year. Typically, students are admitted for graduate study in psychology only for the Ph.D. program; however, students admitted to psychology may obtain a master's degree after they have completed their first-year research project if they find it necessary to have a degree as formal evidence of progress toward the Ph.D.

Faculty members and graduate students have many affiliations with other departments, institutes, and training programs: Institute on Aging, Waisman Center on Mental Retardation and Human Development, Wisconsin Regional Primate Research Center, Health Emotions Center, Neuroscience Training Program, Keck Neuroimaging Center, Hearing Training Program, Women's Studies Research Center, Institute for Research on Poverty, NSF National Consortium on Violence Research, Mass Communications Research Center, and Survey Research Laboratory. There are strong ties to the departments of Anatomy, Anthropology, Communicative Disorders, Educational Psychology, Entomology, Forest and Wildlife Ecology, Medical Microbiology and Immunology, Industrial Engineering, Ophthalmology, Psychiatry, Sociology, and Zoology.

REQUIREMENTS

MINIMUM DEGREE REQUIREMENTS AND SATISFACTORY PROGRESS

To make progress toward a graduate degree, students must meet the Graduate School Minimum Degree Requirements and Satisfactory Progress (http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiesandrequirementstext) in addition to the requirements of the program.

MASTER'S DEGREES

M.A., M.S.

MINIMUM GRADUATE DEGREE CREDIT REQUIREMENT

30 credits

MINIMUM GRADUATE RESIDENCE CREDIT REQUIREMENT

16 credits

MINIMUM GRADUATE COURSEWORK (50%) REQUIREMENT

Half of degree coursework (15 credits out of 30 total credits) must be in graduate-level coursework; courses with the Graduate Level Coursework attribute are identified and searchable in the university’s Course Guide (http://my.wisc.edu/CourseGuideRedirect/BrowseByTitle).

PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: GRADUATE WORK FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Applying prior coursework toward the graduate degree is allowed only in exceptional circumstances. In total, only 6 credits maximum may be applied from prior coursework, including any prior coursework from graduate work from other institutions, from a UW–Madison undergraduate degree or from the UW–Madison University Special career. Coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to the program may not be used to satisfy master's degree requirements.

PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: UW–MADISON UNDERGRADUATE

Applying prior coursework toward the graduate degree is allowed only in exceptional circumstances. In total, only 6 credits maximum may be applied from prior coursework, including any prior coursework from graduate work from other institutions, from a UW–Madison undergraduate degree or from the UW–Madison University Special career. Coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to the program may not be used to satisfy master's degree requirements.

PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: UW–MADISON UNIVERSITY SPECIAL

Applying prior coursework toward the graduate degree is allowed only in exceptional circumstances. In total, only 6 credits maximum may be applied from prior coursework, including any prior coursework from graduate work from other institutions, from a UW–Madison undergraduate degree or from the UW–Madison University Special career. Coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to the program may not be used to satisfy master's degree requirements.

CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED

12 credits

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC COURSES REQUIRED

Must take PSYCH 610 Statistical Analysis of Psychological Experiments, PSYCH 710 Design and Analysis of Psychological Experiments, complete required First-Year Project and reach 30 credits to receive master's.

OVERALL GRADUATE GPA REQUIREMENT

3.00

OTHER GRADE REQUIREMENTS

The Graduate School requires an average grade of B or better in all coursework (300 or above, not including research credits) taken as a graduate student unless conditions for probationary status require higher grades. Grades of Incomplete are considered to be unsatisfactory if they are not removed during the next enrolled semester.

PROBATION POLICY

The Graduate School regularly reviews the record of any student who earned grades of BC, C, D, F, or Incomplete in a graduate course (300 or above), or grade of U in research credits. This review could result in academic probation with a hold on future enrollment or in being suspended from the Graduate School.
ADVISOR / COMMITTEE

Every graduate student is required to have an advisor. To ensure that students are making satisfactory progress toward a degree, the Graduate School expects them to meet with their advisor on a regular basis.

An advisor generally serves as the thesis advisor. In many cases, an advisor is assigned to incoming students. Students can be suspended from the Graduate School if they do not have an advisor. An advisor is a faculty member, or sometimes a committee, from the major department responsible for providing advice regarding graduate studies.

A committee often accomplishes advising for the students in the early stages of their studies.

ASSESSMENT AND EXAMINATIONS

Contact the program for information on required assessments and examinations.

TIME CONSTRAINTS

Master’s degree students who have been absent for five or more consecutive years lose all credits that they have earned before their absence. Individual programs may count the coursework students completed prior to their absence for meeting program requirements; that coursework may not count toward Graduate School credit requirements.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

Contact the program for information on any language requirements.

ADMISSIONS

An applicant is admitted into the program by an individual faculty member or by an area group (i.e., a group of faculty members associated with a major area of concentration) and not by the department as a whole, nor by an admissions committee. Because these programs tend to be small, they may not admit students in a particular year. Applicants interested in a particular program or working with a particular faculty member should reference graduate program (http://psych.wisc.edu/graduate-program.htm) on the psychology website or contact individual faculty members to determine if admissions are likely for that year.

Each faculty member and area group give preference to applicants who have a high potential for success in graduate school and who also share research interests with the prospective faculty sponsor. Applicants should consider carefully the description of faculty research interests, read several of their publications, and consult with faculty and advisors at the undergraduate institution before applying to the program. Whereas most applicants have majored in psychology, the department gives full consideration to applicants with undergraduate majors in other relevant areas.

Given its commitment to students, the Department of Psychology takes seriously its responsibility when admitting an applicant. Every piece of information is considered carefully. Students are selected on the basis of record of academic achievement, Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores, references, evidence of motivation and ability to do research, and also the fit between faculty and student research interests.

Information regarding applications deadlines is on the program website (http://psych.wisc.edu/graduate-admission-and-requirements.htm). Applicants should have a completed application in by the deadline to ensure full consideration. Most students admitted into the program are supported by either a research or project assistantship, teaching assistantship, or fellowship.

ADMISSION SELECTION CRITERIA

Although individual faculty members and area groups decide who will be admitted, the psychology department sets certain minimum standards that must be met by those admitted to the graduate program. These are an undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale as well as verbal and quantitative scores on the GRE that sum to at least 310.

Consideration for admission is highly competitive. The department receives approximately 400 applications each year and less than 10 percent are admitted to the program. Applicants who fall below the minimum standards set by the department may still be admitted where there is clear justification (e.g., international students or minority group students whose GRE scores may not be an indicator of potential for graduate work, or students who are below the minimum requirement in one respect but well above it in other respects).

Undergraduate research experience is highly valued in applicants to the program and greatly enhances their chances of admission. Such research experience provides an opportunity to discover whether research is of interest and provides evidence of motivation and ability to do research.

Three references are required and are read very carefully. Good letters in favor of the applicant are essential and should be provided by faculty who know the applicant fairly well. The references should provide information that will evaluate potential for graduate work beyond that revealed by GPA and GRE scores. For example, a reference from a professor who writes about a student’s unique skills, research abilities, and motivation is more influential than a reference that says the student received an “A” and was “very pleasant.” Thus, references from faculty the applicant has worked with on a research project or senior thesis carry more weight in making a decision to admit.

In addition to references, grades, and Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores, the faculty also consider carefully the personal statement. Applicants should describe in the personal statement any prior research experience and their role in that research.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

• Students will develop a broad understanding of the field of psychology.
• Students will develop a proficiency in statistical analyses relevant to psychological research.
• Students will acquire basic understanding in experimental design.
• Students will develop literature research and critical thinking skills used in psychological research and teaching.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

• Students will develop skills for oral and written communication of experimental findings.
• Students will develop literature research and critical thinking skills used in psychological research and teaching.
Faculty: Professors Goldsmith (chair), Abramson, Alibali, A. Auger, Berridge, Brauer, Coe, Curtin, Davidson, Devine, Gernsbacher, Gooding, Harackiewicz, Hyde, Jenison, MacDonald, Marler, Niedenthal, Pollak, Postle, Rogers, Rosengren, Ryff, Saffran, Seidenberg; Associate Professors Bennett, Miyamoto, Shutts; Assistant Professors Green, Li, Lupyan, Rokers, Saalmann, Simmering. Affiliated Faculty: Bakshi, Bolt, Dilworth-Bart, Edwards, Ellis-Weismer, Gammie, Hermann, Johnson, Kalin, Kalish, Koenigs, Litovsky, Lutfi, MacLean, Nathan, Nitschke, Piper, Populin, Ritters, Sanchez, Schneider