

Recommendations for Undergraduates Pursuing Graduate Studies in Clinical Psychology

Core Knowledge Domain Courses:

The American Psychological Association (APA) provides accreditation for Clinical Psychology Doctoral programs. As part of the accreditation guidelines, APA requires demonstration of exposure to certain core knowledge domains at the undergraduate level. These knowledge domains include 1) history of psychology, 2) physiological psychology, 3) cognitive psychology, 4) developmental psychology, 5) social psychology, and 6) affective bases of behavior. Completion of courses at the undergraduate level that cover these domains will facilitate graduate education at universities offering doctoral degrees in clinical psychology by providing a basis for more advanced study at the graduate level and meeting admissions requirements.

Based on the APA requirements for clinical doctoral training, all undergraduate psychology majors who are interested in applying to clinical psychology doctoral programs are strongly encouraged to complete the following courses as part of the Psychology Core and Elective courses:

- PSY 303: Foundations of Physiological Psychology (Psychology Core course)
- PSY 308: History of Psychology (Psychology Elective course)
- PSY 316: Foundations of Cognitive Psychology (Psychology Core course)
- PSY 330 or 334: Foundations of Developmental Psychology (Psychology Core course)
- PSY 360: Foundations of Social Psychology (Psychology Core course)
- PSY 412: Motivation and Emotion (Psychology Elective course)

Clinically-Oriented Courses:

In addition to the courses listed above, students should consider taking clinically oriented courses that align with their clinical and research interests such as:

- PSY 341 – Foundations of Abnormal Psychology
- PSY 361 – Healthcare Provider Skills
- PSY 421 – Behavior Modification
- PSY 422 – Psychopharmacology of Abused Drugs
- PSY 438 – Childhood Behavior Disorders
- PSY 451 – Basic Principles of Psychotherapy
- PSY 469 – Psychology and the Legal System
- PSY 470 – Health Psychology
- PSY 481 – Principles of Psychological Assessment

Clinically-Oriented Research:

Participate in laboratory work with multiple clinical psychology faculty or other faculty starting in your sophomore year for course credit (PSY 496: Advanced Independent Study, or PSY 498: Advanced Independent Research) or on a volunteer basis. You can find out more about the research interests of the psychology faculty on the [department faculty webpage](#).

Participate in clinical research with mental health or related professionals in the community under faculty supervision (PSY 497: Supervised Field Experience).

Clinically-Oriented Practice:

Obtain clinical practice experience (e.g., assessment, treatment assistance) as a paraprofessional with mental health or related professionals in the community under faculty supervision (PSY 497: Supervised Field Experience).

Other Recommendations:

Get involved in Psi Chi, the national honor society for psychology students, as well as the McNair Scholar program, the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program, the UNLV Honors College, and the UNLV Department of Psychology OUMP program.

Talk with directors of community mental health agencies about openings for volunteers and paraprofessionals. Donate your time conducting assessments, observing treatment sessions, and engaging in telephone work, perhaps at a suicide hotline.

Get ongoing advice from one or more faculty mentors about deciding on career options, writing a letter of intent, and choosing graduate schools of interest.

If possible, present a paper at a psychology conference regarding your clinical research

Find out which graduate schools might best fit your interests, and tailor your application toward a specific faculty member or two who would best match your interests.

Review information provided for students by the American Psychological Association such as the database *Graduate Study in Psychology* and the [Careers in Psychology brochure](#).

Read the books *What Can You Do with a Major in Psychology: Real People, Real Jobs, Real Rewards* by Shelley O'Hara, and *Insider's Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical and Counseling Psychology* by Tracy Mayne

Ask questions and get as much information as possible!