

CAREER ORIENTATION OVERLAY: COOL for CLINICAL AND COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

The COOL for Clinical and Counseling Psychology emphasizes specific coursework for psychology majors who wish to pursue graduate study in order to practice psychology in a clinical setting. This COOL is designed to provide students with direction in course selection that allows for flexibility in exploring specific interests while maximizing one's chances of being admitted to graduate school. Therefore, the curriculum provides for a few required courses, some highly recommended courses, and some courses that are suggested for students interested in pursuing graduate education.

Clinical Psychologists: Clinical psychologists assess and treat people with psychological problems. They may act as therapists for people experiencing normal psychological crises (e.g., grief) or for individuals suffering from chronic psychiatric disorders. Some clinical psychologists are generalists who work with a wide variety of populations, while others work with specific groups like children, the elderly, or those with specific disorders (e.g., schizophrenia). They are trained in universities or professional schools of psychology. They may be found working in academic settings, hospitals, community health centers, or private practice.

Counseling Psychologists: Counseling psychologists do many of the same things that clinical psychologists do. However, counseling psychologists tend to focus more on persons with adjustment problems rather than on persons suffering from severe psychological disorders. They may be trained in Psychology Departments or in Schools of Education. Counseling psychologists are employed in academic settings, college counseling centers, community mental health centers, and private practice.

School Psychologists: There are two separate routes for working with children in schools. Traditionally, school psychologists get either a master's degree or a doctoral degree and specialize in the assessment of learning disabilities and academically related problems. The goal is to help teachers and students recognize instructional needs and develop strategies to help the student learn. They also get training in the intervention of class room management and behavior problems. Increasingly, clinical psychologists with training in childhood emotional problems are working in the schools with parents, students, and teachers when students have been identified with emotional and behavioral problems.

Your successful application to graduate school will depend on at least four things: (a) good grades, particularly in your psychology classes during your junior and senior years (3.0 overall is a minimum at many schools); (b) your letters of reference; (c) your research or clinical experience; and (d) your test scores such as the GRE (minimum requirements can vary from 500 to 650 on each of the Verbal and Quantitative portions of the exam). For more information about increasing your chances of being accepted into graduate school, talk to your advisor and instructors, and consult the handout entitled APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL: STRATEGIES AND TIME-LINE which is available in the Self-Advising Center in the Psychology Department.

Required Courses

The Department of Psychology requires at least 30 credits in psychology, which must include Psych. 111 (Introduction to Psychology), Psych 350 (Research Methods I), and Psych 351 (Research Methods II). In addition the department requires successful completion of an elementary statistics course (Stat 330), and 15 credits of courses in psychology at the 400 level (e.g., five courses). See "Requirements for a Major in Psychology" located in the advising center for specific information regarding psychology requirements for 400 level courses.

Highly Recommended Courses

The lower level psychology classes which are recommended by this COOL include: Psych 250 (Developmental Psychology), Psych 214 (Social Interaction), and Psych 270 (Abnormal Psychology).

The upper level psychology classes which are recommended by this COOL include Psych 440 (Experimental Methods), Psych 472 (Advanced Psychopathology) or Psych 473 (Child Psychopathology). These courses have prerequisites; consult the NDSU Bulletin for details.

The psychology core courses which are most desirable for students applying for graduate study include Psych 468 (Personality), and Psych 465 (Psychobiology).

Because most clinical and some counseling graduate programs give high priority to applicants' research experience in making acceptance decisions, research involvement is highly recommended. Psych 497 (Independent Study) can be taken to earn course credit for conducting research.

Some counseling psychology programs like students who have had some clinical experience. Psych 495 (Field Experience) is a way of earning course credit for volunteer work in an applied setting (e.g., crisis hotline, rape and abuse crisis center). For more information, see the handout on Field Experience available in the Psychology Self-Advising Center. These experiences are also great to help you decide if this is really the kind of work you would like to do.

Suggested Courses

Psychology courses which might be helpful for students interested in clinical practice include Psych 210 (Human Sexuality), Psych 211 (Behavior Modification), and Psych 212 (Drug Use & Abuse. Introduction to Health Psychology (Psyc 280), Forensic Psychology (Psyc 370), Clinical Psychology (Psyc 380), Psychology of Aging (Psyc 471), or Neuropsychology (Psyc 486) might be helpful if you are trying to decide whether you would like to work in a setting that involves issues related to health, legal, mental health, aging, or brain disease and injury.

For students who wish to achieve a high level of research competence and thus enhance their graduate school opportunities, Psych 489 (Honors Thesis) is suggested. This full-year course involves planning and completing an independent research project. For more information, see the handout on Honors Thesis available in the

Psychology Self-Advising Center and make sure to visit with your advisor early in your schooling.

Courses in other disciplines may be taken to supplement the psychology major. Additional statistics courses such as Stat 331 (Regression Analysis) and Stat 461 (Applied Regression Models) are suggested.

Other courses of general interest include upper level sociology courses in medical sociology or emergency management. Courses in Criminal Justice are popular options for students interested in forensics. Biological sciences courses in human anatomy and physiology or genetics provide great foundations for later clinical study. Course work in Human Development and Family science may also be useful for students interested in Counseling or School Psychology. Finally, one could consider additional course work in women's studies or gerontology.