

# INTERESTED IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY GRAD SCHOOL? HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW!

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE COUNCIL OF UNIVERSITY DIRECTORS OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY (CUDCP) <http://chp.phhp.ufl.edu/cudcp/>

**HOW DO I KNOW IF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY IS THE BEST TYPE OF TRAINING FOR ME?** Clinical psychologists work to alleviate mental, emotional, and behavioral symptoms by conducting scientific research and by providing and evaluating clinical services (see [www.div12.org](http://www.div12.org) or [www.clinicalchildpsychology.org](http://www.clinicalchildpsychology.org)). If you are not primarily interested in doctoral level research training, your goals might be better met by programs providing masters level degrees such as the MSW in Social Work ([www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org)), the MPH in Public Health, or a masters in School Psychology. Terminal masters programs in psychology or counseling which provide training as a helping professional are also available in many psychology and education departments. Each field needs more professionals, and such programs may allow you to achieve your goals in a shorter period of time. Professional/practice-oriented programs are typically larger and accept a higher ratio of applicants. However, be sure to check out the credentialing or licensing (e.g. Licensed Professional Counselor- LPC) that you will be able to obtain with each specific degree.

**TO WHICH CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAMS SHOULD I APPLY?** Thoroughly research doctoral programs in clinical psychology before applying because they differ markedly on important variables! Start with one of several published guides (the American Psychological Association (APA) publishes one: <http://books.apa.org/books.cfm?id=4270092>) available at your library or online. Faculty mentors and current graduate students are also good sources of information. There are two types of doctoral degrees in clinical psychology (Ph.D. and Psy.D.). Doctoral programs are located within two types of schools (currently designated by APA as university-based programs or professional schools). Be smart about your decision!

**WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAMS?** If the program is accredited by APA or the Canadian Psychological Association, the program must post specific data online to help you make an informed decision (see <http://chp.phhp.ufl.edu/cudcp/address/univlinks.php> or look on the program's website under the heading **Student Admissions, Outcomes, and Other Data**). You should look for answers to the following questions:

- 1. How many students enter each admissions class?** Clinical psychology doctoral programs typically accept fewer than 15 students each year; be cautious when considering programs that accept many more. As the number of students in incoming classes increases, you need to scrutinize the program's data on student-faculty ratios (which may affect quality of training and clinical supervision), student success in obtaining an internship, and graduates' performance on the licensing exam (EPPP).
- 2. How much does it cost to attend graduate school; will I incur substantial debt?** Most Ph.D. programs waive tuition and even give you a stipend to attend! In contrast, some programs charge \$10,000-\$30,000 tuition each year. More information is available at: <http://research.apa.org/gs00tab30a.pdf>. Students who graduate from doctoral programs that charge tuition incur substantial debt. APA reports that about one-third of all students have over \$75,000 of debt when they graduate; most of these students attended a tuition-charging graduate program (<http://research.apa.org/des07/table09.pdf>). Your debt load will increase considerably if it takes many years to obtain your degree; check data on the average length of time for students to graduate. Look at data from a career counseling center to learn about starting salaries for mental health professionals.
- 3. How many of the students each year successfully obtain an internship placement?** You must complete a one-year predoctoral internship before you can graduate with a doctoral degree. These internships are usually separate from the doctoral program and require a separate application later in your training. Currently, there are more applicants than internship slots available, and your degree will be delayed until you are able to obtain and complete an internship. Some programs report less than 75% of their students obtain an internship in any given year. If you end up having to take an internship that is unaccredited or unpaid, this will affect your debt load and may affect future employment options significantly. This is a critical issue!
- 4. How well am I likely to do on the national licensing exam?** You must be licensed to practice as a psychologist. Visit the web link below to see the average score on the national licensing exam (EPPP) for all doctoral clinical psychology programs. Lower scores indicate a higher likelihood that students from that program may fail the exam. See [http://www.asppb.net/files/public/2006\\_EPPP\\_Performance\\_complete.pdf](http://www.asppb.net/files/public/2006_EPPP_Performance_complete.pdf).

**WHAT ARE MY CHANCES OF GETTING INTO A CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL PROGRAM?** Many Ph.D. programs receive over 200 applications and accept only 1-10% of those applicants. Before you attend a program with much higher proportions of applicants being admitted, find out the answers to the questions listed above. Although you will have a better chance of acceptance at less competitive programs, the quality of your training, the financial expense to you, and your career choices could be affected. Take all these factors into consideration and compare your options to other fields (see above) that can offer excellent training and will also allow you to make an extremely important impact in the mental health field.

**WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?** Links for learning more about graduate school in clinical psychology are listed below:

- <http://www.apa.org/education/grad/applying.aspx>
- <http://www.apa.org/ed/graduate/faqs.html#suited>
- <http://www-usr.rider.edu/~suler/gradschl.html>
- <http://forums.studentdoctor.net/showthread.php?t=489204>
- [http://www.clinicalchildpsychology.org/student\\_info/](http://www.clinicalchildpsychology.org/student_info/)
- <http://www.abct.org/dStudents/?m=mStudents&fa=GettingGraduate>
- <http://www.unc.edu/~mjp1970/Mitch%27s%20Grad%20School%20Advice.pdf>
- <http://www.uni.edu/walsh/linda2.html>