

Department of Psychology Undergraduate Program Handbook

Fall 2023 – Spring 2024 Edition

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Dear Psychology Student,

Welcome to the Department of Psychology at Cleveland State University! Thank you for joining us. We hope that you find your studies in psychology both intellectually productive and fun. If we can help you out along the way, please let us know.

We have created this *Handbook* to help answer some of the most common questions that might arise as you major or minor in Psychology. No handbook can provide all of the information that you might need, so if you have questions that are not answered, you may schedule an advising appointment, call, email, stop by the Psychology Office, or consult individual faculty members.

Please note:

- Revisions to this *Handbook* will be published at least annually on the Department of Psychology website.
- Although intended to help you understand the major or minor requirements for your degree, the information contained in this *Handbook* is unofficial and may be inaccurate. The official location of the requirements is the *Undergraduate Catalog* at <http://catalog.csuohio.edu/>. From this page, select the version of the undergraduate catalog that pertains to your catalog year (see Section 2.1 of this *Handbook* to learn about catalog years). If there is a discrepancy between this *Handbook* and the *Undergraduate Catalog*, the *Catalog* is correct.
- **SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC:** This *Handbook* is written to discuss a typical year at CSU. At the time we write this *Handbook*, we cannot predict with certainty how the pandemic or any other unforeseen circumstances will affect the functioning of the University. Therefore, references in this *Handbook* to particular campus locations may or may not apply depending on the situation at the moment. For instance, email or Zoom meetings may replace in-person contact. We will do our best to keep you apprised of changes as they occur.

Sincerely,

The Department of Psychology Faculty

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1 How do I declare a Psychology major, Psychology minor, or Neuroscience minor?

There are two ways to declare a psychology major or minor: (1) You can do so on your own through Degree Audit (use the “Ask a Question” function, and ask to change / add your major or minor). Alternatively, (2) you may contact one of your non-faculty advisors. You can find these advisors in your My Success Network in Starfish. Under each person’s name you can see what type of advisor they are – look for an advisor that does *not* say “Faculty.”

2 What courses do I need to take?

2.1 I hear that there are different sets of requirements based on when I became a Psychology major/minor. How do I know which requirements apply to me?

The requirements for a psychology major or minor depend on what the University calls your “catalog rights,” which are labeled according to a particular semester and year. Generally, your catalog rights are for the semester and year in which you entered Cleveland State University. (For example, typically, a student who enters the University in Fall 2022, has “Fall Semester 2022 catalog rights.”) You can find the semester of your catalog rights by getting a degree audit report in CampusNet.

The requirements for any set of catalog rights are specified in the University’s *Undergraduate Catalog*, which is published once per year. For example, the major, minor, general education, and other academic requirements published in the 2022-2023 catalog specify the expectations of students with Fall 2022 Semester catalog rights, Spring 2023 Semester catalog rights, and Summer 2023 Semester catalog rights.

There are three reasons your catalog rights might change:

1. You may, at any time, elect to have the catalog rights of a **newer** catalog. For example, if you have Fall 2022 Semester catalog rights but would prefer to complete the requirements specified in the 2023-2024 catalog, you may choose to change. We strongly recommend meeting with your advisors before doing so.
2. If you stop taking classes at CSU for a year or more you lose your previous catalog rights and are assigned the catalog rights (and obligations) of the semester in which you return to the University.
3. If you leave CSU to attend another institution—even for a semester—and then return to CSU, you will lose your catalog rights. When you return, you will be assigned the catalog rights (and obligations) of the semester in which you return. (This does NOT apply to students who travel abroad for a semester or who take a summer class or two at another university; it applies only to people who officially become students of another university.) If you are a CSU student who intends to take courses at another institution, before doing so you should consult one of your non-faculty advisors. You can find these advisors in your My Success Network in Starfish. Under each person’s name you can see what type of advisor they are – look for an advisor that does *not* say “Faculty” for this type of advising.

2.2 What are the requirements for a Psychology Major based on the 2023-2024 (or more recent) *Undergraduate Catalog*?

If you have Fall 2023 or more recent catalog rights, your major requirements are as follows:

REQUIRED COURSES: You must complete all of the following courses:

- PSY 101 (Introduction to Psychology)
- PSY 200 (A Major's Guide to Psychology at CSU)
- PSY 217 (Behavioral Science Statistics: Description) – (MTH/STA 147, SOC 354, OMS 201, or BUS 201 can satisfy this requirement)
- PSY 317 (Behavioral Science Statistics: Inference) – (MTH/STA 347 or OMS 202 can satisfy this requirement)
- PSY 312 (Research Methods)
- PSY 412 (Psychology Laboratory) or PSY 415 (Evaluating Psychological Research)
- PSY 499 (Exit Evaluation)

CORE COURSES: So that you will be exposed to a broad range of topic areas in psychology, you must complete at least one course from each of the following five core areas. Additional core courses that you take beyond this minimum will count toward the 'elective' requirement described in the next section.

- **Psychological Health Core:** PSY 345 (Abnormal Psychology) or PSY 353 (Health Psychology)
- **Social / Personality Core:** PSY 339 (Social Psychology) or PSY 342 (Psychology of Personality)
- **Perception and Cognition Core:** PSY 368 (Perceptual Processes) or PSY 372 (Memory and Cognition)
- **Neuroscience Core:** PSY 482 (Biological Basis of Behavior) or PSY 487 (Brain and Cognition)
- **Diversity / Equity / Inclusion Core:** PSY 255 (Psychology of Women and Gender) or PSY 356 (Multicultural Psychology)

ELECTIVE COURSES: You must take enough Psychology courses so that you have completed 42 credits of psychology courses.

NOTES:

- **For a course to count toward the Psychology major, you must earn a C or better. (Exception: S grades are accepted for courses taken in Spring or Summer 2020)**
- **A student may count no more than 6 credits of PSY 390, and no more than 6 credits of PSY 396, toward the major requirements, but may count no more than 9 credits of PSY 390 and PSY 396 combined toward the major.**
- **All students must complete at least 16 PSY credits from CSU coursework. Additionally, 12 of these 16 credits must be upper division (300 or 400-level).**

2.3 What are the requirements for a Psychology Major based on the Fall 2018-Summer 2023 Undergraduate Catalogs?

If you have catalog rights from Fall 2018 through Summer 2023, your major requirements are as follows:

REQUIRED COURSES: You must complete all of the following courses:

- PSY 101 (Introduction to Psychology)
- PSY 200 (A Major's Guide to Psychology at CSU)
- PSY 217 (Behavioral Science Statistics: Description) – (MTH/STA 147, SOC 354, OMS 201, or BUS 201 can satisfy this requirement)
- PSY 317 (Behavioral Science Statistics: Inference) – (MTH/STA 347 or OMS 202 can satisfy this requirement)
- PSY 312 (Research Methods)
- PSY 412 (Psychology Laboratory) or PSY 415 (Evaluating Psychological Research)
- PSY 499 (Exit Evaluation)

CORE COURSES: So that you will be exposed to a broad range of topic areas in psychology, you must take courses that are distributed across the four core areas listed below. You must complete at least one course from each of the following four core areas, and a second course from one of the core areas. Additional core courses that you take beyond this minimum will count toward the 'elective' requirement described in the next section.

- **Psychological Health Core:** PSY 345 (Abnormal Psychology) or PSY 353 (Health Psychology)
- **Social / Personality Core:** PSY 339 (Social Psychology) or PSY 342 (Psychology of Personality)
- **Perception and Cognition Core:** PSY 368 (Perceptual Processes) or PSY 372 (Memory and Cognition)
- **Neuroscience Core:** PSY 482 (Biological Basis of Behavior) or PSY 487 (Brain and Cognition)
- **One additional course from any Core area**

ELECTIVE COURSES: You must take enough Psychology courses so that you have completed 42 credits of psychology courses.

NOTES:

- **For a course to count toward the Psychology major, you must earn a C or better. (Exception: S grades are accepted for courses taken in Spring or Summer 2020)**
- **A student may count no more than 6 credits of PSY 390, and no more than 6 credits of PSY 396, toward the major requirements, but may count no more than 9 credits of PSY 390 and PSY 396 combined toward the major.**
- **All students must complete at least 16 PSY credits from CSU coursework. Additionally, 12 of these 16 credits must be upper division (300 or 400-level).**

2.4 What are the requirements for a Psychology Major based on the Fall 2014-Summer 2018¹ Undergraduate Catalogs?

If you have rights to the Fall 2014 catalog, the Summer 2018 catalog, or any catalog in between, your major requirements are as follows:

REQUIRED COURSES: You must complete all of the following courses:

- PSY 101 (Introduction to Psychology)
- PSY 217 (Behavioral Science Statistics: Description) – (MTH/STA 147, SOC 354, OMS 201, or BUS 201 can satisfy this requirement)
- PSY 317 (Behavioral Science Statistics: Inference) – (MTH/STA 347 or OMS 202 can satisfy this requirement)
- PSY 312 (Research Methods)
- PSY 412 (Psychology Laboratory) or PSY 415 (Evaluating Psychological Research)
- PSY 499 (Exit Evaluation)

CORE COURSES: So that you will be exposed to a broad range of topic areas in psychology, you must take courses that are distributed across the four core areas listed below. You must complete at least one course from each of the following four core areas, and a second course from one of the core areas. Additional core courses that you take beyond this minimum will count toward the ‘elective’ requirement described in the next section.

- **Psychological Health Core:** PSY 345 (Abnormal Psychology) or PSY 353 (Health Psychology)
- **Social / Personality Core:** PSY 339 (Social Psychology) or PSY 342 (Psychology of Personality)
- **Perception and Cognition Core:** PSY 368 (Perceptual Processes) or PSY 372 (Memory and Cognition)
- **Neuroscience Core:** PSY 482 (Biological Basis of Behavior) or PSY 487 (Brain and Cognition)
- **One additional course from any Core area**

ELECTIVE COURSES: You must take enough Psychology courses so that you have completed 42 credits of psychology courses.

NOTES:

- **For a course to count toward the Psychology major, you must earn a C or better. (Exception: S grades are accepted for courses taken in Spring or Summer 2020)**
- **A student may count no more than 6 credits of PSY 390, and no more than 6 credits of PSY 396, toward the major requirements, but may count no more than 9 credits of PSY 390 and PSY 396 combined toward the major.**
- **All students must complete at least 16 PSY credits from CSU coursework. Additionally, for students who have Fall 2016 or later catalog rights, 12 of these 16 credits must be upper division (300 or 400-level).**

¹ Given that most Psychology students are not using this *Catalog*, the advice in Sections 3 and later in this *Handbook* are based on the Fall 2018 (or more recent) *Catalogs*

2.5 What are the requirements for a Psychology Minor based on the Fall 2014 or more recent Undergraduate Catalogs?

If you have rights to the Fall 2014 catalog or a more recent catalog, you must complete the following sets of courses:

REQUIRED COURSES: You must complete both of the following courses:

- PSY 101 (Introduction to Psychology)
- PSY 312 (Research Methods)

CORE COURSES: So that you will be exposed to a broad range of topic areas in psychology, you must take courses that are distributed across the four core areas listed below. You must complete at least one course from three of the four core areas². Additional core courses that you take beyond this minimum will count toward the ‘elective’ requirement described in the next section.

- **Psychological Health Core:** PSY 345 (Abnormal Psychology) or PSY 353 (Health Psychology)
- **Social / Personality Core:** PSY 339 (Social Psychology) or PSY 342 (Psychology of Personality)
- **Perception and Cognition Core:** PSY 368 (Perceptual Processes) or PSY 372 (Memory and Cognition)
- **Neuroscience Core:** PSY 482 (Biological Basis of Behavior) or PSY 487 (Brain and Cognition)

ELECTIVE COURSES: In addition to the courses listed above, you need to take enough other psychology courses of interest to you so that you complete at least 21 credits of psychology courses. These can be additional “core” courses beyond the minimum described above, or other psychology courses. NO MORE THAN 3 ELECTIVE CREDITS MAY BE FROM COURSES NUMBERED BELOW 300!

NOTE: For a course to count toward the Psychology minor, you must earn a C or better! (Exception: S grades are accepted for courses taken in Spring or Summer 2020)

² In the Fall 2023 *Catalog* the Department of Psychology instituted a new Core area for the major. However, we did not submit parallel changes to the minor in time to get them incorporated into the Catalog. Psychology minors with Fall 2014 or more recent catalog rights wishing to use a “DEI Core Course” may contact the Department for permission. In this case, the Core requirement would still be three courses. The footnoted sentence above would then be changed to “You must complete at least one course from three of the five core areas.”

2.6 What are the requirements for a psychology major or minor based on catalogs earlier than Fall 2014?

If you have catalog rights prior to Fall 2014 you should consult an advisor in the Department of Psychology for specialized advising. Use Starfish or email psych.advising@csuohio.edu to schedule an appointment.

2.7 What are the requirements of the Neuroscience Minor?

The Neuroscience Minor is an interdisciplinary minor that spans several areas of study at CSU. To complete the Neuroscience Minor you must earn at least 15 credits of coursework from the following list:

BIO 426 (Neurobiology)
 CSD 351 (Anatomy and Physiology of the Speech and Hearing Mechanism)
 HSC 476 (Neuroscience Systems) & HSC 478 (Neuroscience Lab)
 HSC 495 (Neuroscience Independent Study)
 PSY 101 (Introduction to Psychology)
 PSY 368 (Perceptual Processes)
 PSY 482 (Biological Bases of Behavior)
 PSY 487 (Brain and Cognition)
 PSY 481 (Psychopharmacology)
 PSY 397 (Neuroscience Independent Study)

NOTES:

- BIO 426 requires at least 11 credits of prerequisite coursework
- HSC 476 require at least 8 credits of prerequisite coursework and is only available to certain majors or by permission
- No more than 4 credits of PSY 397 and/or HSC 495 may be counted toward the 15-credit requirement of the Neuroscience Minor

3 I have questions. Whom should I talk to for advising?

The best person from whom to seek advising depends on what kind of question you have. To complete a bachelor's degree, there are several different kinds of requirements that you have to satisfy: University requirements; college requirements; major requirements; and, possibly, minor requirements.

Your college requirements are for the college in which your major is located. If you have more than one major, and the majors are in different colleges, you have to complete the college requirements for each college.

Psychology is in the **College of Arts and Sciences**.

For a list of all of the requirements that you have to complete, you may consult the Degree Audit tab in CampusNet. When you click on Degree Audit, you will get lists of the University, College, major, and minor requirements that you must satisfy depending on your catalog rights; an indication of whether you have completed each requirement (or whether your completing the requirement is pending); and, if so, how you have completed the requirement (or how your current registration will satisfy the requirement).

The following sections suggest who is best able to provide advice about various types of requirements.

3.1 Whom should I talk to about Gen.Ed. or other University requirements?

For questions about General Education requirements (including, but not limited to, Writing Across the Curriculum), students should contact one of their non-faculty advisors. You can find these advisors in your My Success Network in Starfish. Under each person's name you can see what type of advisor they are – look for an advisor that does *not* say “Faculty.” For this type of advising.

Faculty or other advisors in the Department of Psychology may not be familiar with General Education requirements and are not qualified to provide definitive advice about them. Therefore, you should talk to a non-faculty advisor about General Education requirements, and to someone in the Department of Psychology about Psychology requirements.

3.2 Psychology: Which Psychology classes do I have to take?

The Department of Psychology has an Advising Center staffed by faculty and graduate assistants who are able to provide advice about what courses you must take to fulfill the major requirements. You can make an appointment through Starfish (under “My Success Network,” select “Psychology Department Advising”). If none of the available appointment times work for you, call the Department of Psychology office (216-687-2544) to arrange an alternative appointment time with either a graduate assistant or a faculty member.

After making your appointment, prepare for it!!!! First, look at the requirements in Section 2 of this *Handbook* to see what is expected of you. Then, go to CampusNet to look at either your transcript or your Degree Audit. Try as best as you can to match the courses that you’ve taken to the Department of Psychology Requirements and write down any questions you have. If you are meeting in person, please PRINT OUT and bring to your appointment a copy of your transcript or Degree Audit to take to the meeting.

The graduate assistants are skilled professionals, but they are graduate students—not Department faculty. You are not required to show a graduate assistant your transcript, but they can be more helpful if you are willing to do so. The graduate students will not have access to your academic records through CampusNet. If you would prefer to not show your transcript to a graduate student, please contact the Department of Psychology (psych.advising@csuohio.edu; 216-687-2544) and specify that you would prefer to talk to a faculty member.

If you’re a Lorain County Community College or Lakeland Partnership student, CSU faculty may be available on these campuses for appointments or drop-ins. You should check the department’s website, on which you can find faculty office hours. You should look for “LCCC Campus” or “Lakeland Campus.” If none of the available appointment times work for you, contact the Department of Psychology (psych.advising@csuohio.edu; 216-687-2544) to arrange an alternative appointment time.

3.3 Psychology: I’m pretty sure I know what the requirements are, but I have some questions about transferring courses from another college or university. What should I do?

If you have a question about transfer courses, or about any other issue related to requirements that go beyond basic issues, you should contact the Department of Psychology with a specific explanation of your issue (psych.advising@csuohio.edu; 216-687-2544).

If you have transferred a course that you think should satisfy some particular CSU requirement, but does not appear to be doing so on your transcript or in your degree audit, this may be because no one has ever transferred that particular course from that particular institution to CSU. (For example, you may have taken a course called *Cognitive Psychology* at Eastern Illinois University that you think should satisfy CSU's requirement for a course in the Perception and Cognition core, or you may have taken a course at Western Washington University called *Measuring Behavior and Analyzing Data: Adventures in Social Data Analysis* that you think should satisfy CSU's PSY 317 requirement.) The Psychology Undergraduate Program Committee can evaluate the course to determine whether it satisfies a particular CSU requirement. To start this process, you should email a copy of the course syllabus to psych.advising@csuohio.edu and request that the Undergraduate Program Committee evaluate the course.

3.4 Graduate School: I'm interested in going to grad school. Whom should I talk to?

If you'd like to talk to someone about graduate school in Psychology, any professor in the Department of Psychology would be happy to talk to you. You may visit any faculty member during their posted advising hours, or make an appointment via email. You can find an Advising Schedule listing each professor's advising hours on the Department of Psychology website (the schedule also has the office location and telephone number of each faculty member). There are several ways to figure out which professor you should talk to:

- First, you can choose a professor whom you already know and with whom you feel comfortable.
- Second, you can choose a professor whose interests match the field of psychology in which you are interested. If you are interested in CSU graduate programs, you might talk to faculty members who participate in the programs of interest to you: Our Department has many different graduate specializations; at our website, <https://artsandsciences.csuohio.edu/psychology/psychologygraduate>, you can find information about the different programs and find which faculty members are associated with each program. If you are interested in graduate programs more generally, talking to a faculty member whose interests match those of your intended area would be a good idea.
- Finally, you can choose a professor based on convenient times. You can find an Advising Schedule listing professors' advising hours on the Department of Psychology website (the schedule also has their office and telephone numbers).

In addition to talking to a professor in person, there are other resources that can tell you about graduate school. See Section 6 of this *Handbook*.

3.5 I want to email a Psychology instructor / professor. Any tips?

We encourage you to email all of your advisors as frequently as you need to – we’re here to help. However, when you do so, there are some ways to make sure that you get the help you need as quickly as possible:

First, make it easy for us to figure out who you are. The less time we spend trying to look up your information, the more time we can spend crafting thoughtful answers to your email. This might include the following:

- Putting your CSU ID number in both the subject line and body of your email.
- Clearly stating your name. If your name differs from the ‘official’ name we have for you on CampusNet (e.g., nickname, name change since you started at CSU), you should clarify this so that we don’t get confused.
- Using your Vikes email address rather than your gmail or other non-CSU address. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prevents us from sharing personal academic details with people other than you. It’s unlikely that anyone would create a fake gmail address in order to trick us into giving out your grades or personal information, but it’s possible. For this reason, we try to talk about your personal details only when we’re sure it’s you. Using your Vikes email address is a good way to reassure us. (You can always forward your Vikes email to your other address(es). To do so, log into CampusNet, select “Email”, and go from there. You should also add a secondary email address in Starfish so that your advisors and instructors can use it to contact you directly.)

Second, be professional. Someday you may be asking us for letters of recommendation, scholarships, etc., and it’s never too early to start cultivating a good impression. (It’s also good practice for the work world.) Be assured that most of us text and we know that the rules for grammar are different when using those media. However, when we read your emails we’re in our professional roles. Here, the rules of formal communication apply. Do your best to use full sentences, punctuation, etc.

Finally, be respectful. If you’re angry or frustrated say so, but keep it civil and refrain from insults, etc. Additionally, start out your email respectfully. Most of your Psychology instructors have earned their doctorates and should therefore be addressed as Dr. If you’re taking a class from the person you’re emailing, the syllabus probably lists the person’s degree after the name. If you’re in doubt, you should either err on the side of caution and use “Dr.” (letting the individual correct you if necessary) or use the more generic title “professor.” Also, please know that we realize that respect goes both ways: If you have preferences for how to be addressed (such as a nickname, specific pronouns, etc.), please let us know.

4 Are there some questions that students frequently ask?

Yes, there are! Below, we answer many of them:

4.1 How do I know which courses to take first?

With a couple of exceptions, the Psychology major is structured so that there aren't many courses that you *must* take in order to take other courses. However, we have some general advice:

- If you haven't taken PSY 101, you should. It's a prerequisite for all Psychology courses except some at the 200 level.
- Take PSY 200 as soon as you can. The earlier you take it, the better prepared you'll be to shape your career – both at CSU as well as after graduation.
- Take statistics (PSY 217 and PSY 317) and PSY 312 as early as you can. An understanding of statistics and research design will help you understand the research discussed in your other courses, and will also better equip you to become involved in research if you choose to do so. If you are required to take PSY 317, you must take PSY 217 or equivalent first. Furthermore, to take PSY 412 and PSY 415, you must have completed statistics and PSY 312, and PSY 415 requires completing your Core areas. Some students feel more comfortable taking some basic mathematics courses prior to PSY 217 or 317; these should be taken early. (In any case, the General Education requirements specify that you complete at least one part of the Quantitative Literacy general education requirement during your first 30 credits.)
- If you want to participate in the Honors Program in Psychology and are eligible to do so (see Section 5 of this *Handbook*), you should take PSY 312 at least four semesters before you plan to graduate, because PSY 312 is a prerequisite for Honors psychology classes.
- What about the other courses? As explained above, the Psychology major is set up to give you a broad overview of many different areas of psychology; you can order the courses in any way you choose. We encourage you to explore many different areas of psychology as you go. If you're interested in a particular area of psychology and are considering making that your career, we encourage you to take a related class as early as possible. If it turns out that it's not what you thought it was, it's better to know early so that you can explore and find an area of psychology that's a better fit for you!

4.2 I tried to enroll in a course but I'm locked out. What can I do?

If you're locked out of a course, it can be for several reasons:

- **Enrollment limit.** We limit the number of students who can take any course for several reasons, including space, materials, and the effort required of the instructor. If a course has reached the enrollment limit, you can add yourself to its waiting list. If an enrolled student drops the course, the first person on the waiting list is given an opportunity to enroll. An important reason for putting yourself on the waiting list for a course that you want to take is that if the list becomes long enough, a section of the course may be added. If a particular course section that you want to take has reached its enrollment limit, you might see whether there is another section, or try to register for the course in another semester. Instructors cannot override enrollment limits in a way that bypasses students already on a waiting list.
- **Prerequisites.** Most of our courses require that you have taken PSY 101, and some courses require that you have taken PSY 217, PSY 317, or PSY 312. The registration system will not let you register for a course that has a prerequisite if you have not completed the prerequisite. The registration system treats in-progress courses as if you have completed them. For example, even if you have not completed PSY 317, you may register for PSY 412 for a spring semester as long as you have also registered for PSY 317 for the fall. In other words, the registration system assumes that you will successfully complete courses for which you have registered. If you're prevented from taking a course because you have not completed the prerequisite, you should take the prerequisite because we believe that the prerequisites are necessary for success in the courses that have them (and instructors of those courses assume that students have completed the prerequisites). If you believe that you should be an exception to our carefully-thought-out rules, you may ask the instructor to waive the prerequisite and give you permission to register. The instructor has the right to refuse this request.
- **Campus.** The Department of Psychology has partnerships with Lakeland and Lorain County Community Colleges. These partnerships are designed to permit students to complete the requirements of a CSU psychology BA by taking courses on the Lakeland and LCCC campuses or online. For some of our online courses, registration priority is given to partnership students. As the start of the semester approaches, we look closely at enrollments for those courses. If it looks like the course won't fill up with Partnership students, we may open it up to all CSU students. Thus, you may want to keep checking CampusNet to see if you can enroll in these courses.

- **Some classes don't allow registration using the online registration system.** Registration for some courses (e.g., PSY 390, 391, 396, 397) requires consent of the instructor or the department. For some of these courses, registration happens after the semester starts. For any such course, you should contact your instructor ahead of time, make sure that you both agree that you'll be enrolled in the course, and be patient.

4.3 What are some frequent problems that students encounter, and what could have been done to avoid them?

Most students are able to devise and complete a major program in psychology without problems. However, we have compiled a list of problems that students sometimes encounter and our advice on how to avoid them.

- **Waiting too long to take statistics and/or research methods courses.** To take our capstone courses (PSY 412 and 415), you must have completed the statistics course(s) and, depending on your requirements, research methods. You should make sure that you complete PSY 317 and PSY 312 at least a semester before the semester you plan to graduate so you can take the capstone course in your last semester.
- **Missing a "Core" course.** The cores are intended to make sure you are exposed to a broad range of psychology topics. We do not grant exceptions to this requirement, so make sure you get all of the Cores you need!
- **Missing a "WAC in Major" course.** At least one of the WAC courses that you take to fulfill the WAC Gen Ed requirement must be in your major. In Psychology, the approved WAC courses are 412, 415, and 498H. Transfer students must pay particular attention to this requirement: You may have taken a course at another university that is similar enough to PSY 412 that the Department of Psychology treats it as PSY 412. However, this applies only to the content of the course: It does not satisfy the WAC requirement, because all approved WAC courses must be completed at CSU. So, if you took a 412-like course at another college or university and we count it as equivalent to PSY 412, you must take some other WAC course (i.e., PSY 415 or PSY 498H) to fulfill the "WAC in major" requirement.

4.4 Some of these courses seem different from the others. What are they all about?

4.4.1 What is the difference between PSY 217 and PSY 317?

PSY 217 covers descriptive statistics and PSY 317 covers inferential statistics. Both types of statistics are required of Psychology majors.

Note that the current General Education requirements specify that a student must take at least one Quantitative Literacy course within the Mathematics and Statistics department. If you have not yet taken a course in the Mathematics and Statistics department, you may consider taking STA 147, which satisfies the PSY 217 requirement. After successfully completing STA 147, you would then take PSY 317.

4.4.2 What is PSY 200?

PSY 200 (A Major's Guide to Psychology at CSU) is a 1-credit course designed to help you fit in with both the CSU Department of Psychology as well as with a career in Psychology. Students in this course learn about the requirements of the major, the faculty in the department and their research interests, and possible employment and graduate school pathways. If you have Fall 2018 or more recent catalog rights you are required to take this course, and we recommend that you do so as soon as you can in order to reap the most benefit from the course. If you have older catalog rights you are not required to take this course, but we still encourage you to do so as we think you'll still find it helpful.

4.4.3 What is PSY 391?

PSY 391 (Internship Experience) is an independently arranged, variable credit course in which students participate in an internship with an organization external to CSU. The full procedures and details can be found at <https://artsandsciences.csuohio.edu/psychology/internship-opportunities>. Students are responsible for locating a suitable internship opportunity and securing the participation of a supervising faculty member. In order for the internship to receive PSY 391 credit, it needs to be related in some way to the field of psychology.

4.4.4 What are PSY 396 and 397?

PSY 396 (Independent Study) and PSY 397 (Neuroscience Independent Study) are independently arranged courses in which any of a wide variety of projects may be completed (obviously, PSY 397 needs to deal with neuroscience in some way – this is the only difference between 396 and

397). All involve working with a Psychology professor to learn things you didn't learn in other classes. For instance, one type of Independent Study may involve choosing a particular topic of interest to you, and working with the professor to read books or journal articles to enhance your knowledge of the topic. Another, likely more common, type of project might involve working in a professor's research laboratory, collecting or analyzing data, or writing reports for publication.

Registration for this course is different from registration for most other courses. To enroll in PSY 396 or 397, you must approach professors and ask if they are willing to work with you on an independent study. It doesn't matter whether the professor is listed as an instructor of PSY 396 or 397 in CampusNet – we add a course for any instructor whenever it's needed. If the instructor agrees, you'll need to pick up a PSY 396 or 397 form in the Department of Psychology office (UN 715). You and the professor will complete the form, after which you'll return it to the office. We can then create permission for you in CampusNet, after which you may log in and register for the course.

The number of credits you may earn in PSY 396 or 397 depends on the extent of the project. You should discuss this with your professor when arranging the details of the project.

How do you know which professors to ask? One way would be to find professors whose classes you've found interesting, and with whom you've gotten along well. You can build on that relationship in your independent study. Another way would be to find a professor whose research interests match yours. You can find the research interests on the department's website (click on "Faculty Directory"). Read through the interests and contact those professors whose interests seem to match your own.

4.4.5 What is the difference between PSY 412 and PSY 415?

First, the similarities: Both courses fulfill the department's Capstone requirement. Both courses fulfill a WAC requirement. Both courses require both PSY 317 and PSY 312 as prerequisites (although PSY 415 also requires the completion of courses from all course areas).

Now on to the differences: PSY 412 takes what you've learned in statistics and research methods and extends it by giving you in-depth training on conducting research. In this class you would (among other activities) actually collect data, analyze them, and write up the results as though you were going to submit them to a psychological journal.

In contrast, PSY 415 takes what you've learned in statistics and research methods and extends it by giving you in-depth training designed to make you a critical consumer of psychological research. Among other assignments, you would read about research from journal articles and

popular press reports, critiquing the information and deciding whether and how it should be used.

All psychology majors need to take at least one of these courses while at CSU. If you take both courses at CSU, they can both count as WAC courses, and the ‘extra’ course can count toward the overall number of credits you need in psychology.

4.4.6 What is PSY 499?

PSY 499 (Exit Evaluation) consists of two parts: One part is a multiple-choice test of your knowledge of all aspects of Psychology. It differs from a traditional test in that it’s not used to evaluate you -- it evaluates the Department of Psychology instead. Furthermore, your performance on the test will not affect your grade – you pass PSY 499 merely by taking the test. Instead, the Department of Psychology looks at your scores, as well as the scores of other students graduating with you, so that we can track our own performance from semester to semester. For instance, if we see that student scores are improving in a particular area, we know that we’re increasing the quality of our education in the related class. The second part is a survey that we use to help us improve our program for undergraduate students.

You should register for PSY 499 in your last semester (even if you’re not signed up for other Psychology courses that semester). Then, visit the class’ Blackboard website to take the exam and survey.

4.5 Do you have internships in Psychology?

Yes, we do! PSY 391 (Internship Experience) is an independently arranged, variable credit course in which students participate in an internship with an organization external to CSU. The full procedures and details can be found at <https://artsandsciences.csuohio.edu/psychology/internship-opportunities> . Students are responsible for locating a suitable internship opportunity and securing the participation of a supervising faculty member. In order for the internship to receive PSY 391 credit, it needs to be related in some way to the field of psychology.

4.6 I’m a transfer student. What’s special about me?

If you have transferred to CSU from another university you may find your situation to be a little different from those of other students. Below, we’ve documented a few things that might help you:

- When you look at your transcript or Degree Audit on CampusNet, you might find that one or more psychology courses are not treated as satisfying the CSU requirements you think they should satisfy. As explained in Section 3.3 of this *Handbook*, this may be because we have not yet evaluated the course (or courses). If you find this to be the case, follow the procedures outlined in Section 3.3.
- CSU has rules related to ‘residency,’ which refers to how many credits you need to take at CSU. You must complete at least 18 Psychology credits at CSU. Furthermore, 12 of those 18 credits must be upper division. Therefore, even if you’ve met all of the Core and Elective requirements, you may find that you need to take additional courses to satisfy the residency requirement. If you are a PSY minor, you are required to take at least nine credits through CSU.
- In addition to Psychology residency requirements, there are overall University residency requirements, and other rules that specify requirements that depend on the number of credits you transfer to CSU (such as how many WAC courses you need to take). To find out about these, you should speak to a non-faculty advisor. You can find these advisors in your My Success Network in Starfish. Under each person’s name you can see what type of advisor they are – look for an advisor that does *not* say “Faculty” for this type of advising.

4.7 I’m a Partnership student. What’s special about me?

If you are a student in either our LCCC or our Lakeland partnership, you may find your situation to be a little different from those of other students. Below, we’ve documented a few things that might help you:

- If you’re a Lorain County Community College or Lakeland Partnership student, your advising (including for major courses) may be done by your non-faculty advisor. Additionally, depending on the semester, CSU faculty might be available on these campuses for appointments or drop-ins. You should check the schedule of faculty office hours on the department website and look for “LCCC Campus” or “Lakeland Campus.” If none of the available appointment times work for you, contact the Department of Psychology office (psych.advising@csuohio.edu; 216-687-2544) to arrange an alternative appointment time.
- CSU has rules related to ‘residency,’ some of which apply to partnership students in the same way they apply to students who transfer to CSU from institutions with which CSU does not have partnerships. These rules refer to how many credits you need to take at CSU. If you are a PSY major, you must take at least 18 credits of CSU Psychology courses. Furthermore, 12 of those 18 credits must be upper division. Therefore, even if you’ve met all of the

Core and Elective requirements, you may have to take additional courses to satisfy the residency requirement. If you are a PSY minor, you are required to take at least nine credits through CSU.

- LCCC Partnership students should be aware of several unique issues:
 - Statistics: PSYH 271 will count as satisfying the PSY 317 requirement. If you have completed PSYH 271, you need not take PSY 217. Instead, you should talk to an advisor about a substitution.
 - Research Methods / Capstone:
 - a. You may complete the research methods sequence in one of the following ways:
 - i. Take LCCC's PSYH 272 at LCCC to satisfy the PSY 312 requirement, and CSU's PSY 415 to satisfy the Capstone / WAC requirements.
 - ii. Take CSU's PSY 312 and PSY 412.
 - iii. Take CSU's PSY 312 and PSY 415.
 - iv. Other options may be available. Speak to a Department of Psychology advisor for more information.
 - b. Students who plan to apply to graduate school should get as much research training and experience as they can. One way that LCCC students can acquire such experience is by taking LCCC's PSYH 277, which we will count as a psychology elective.
- In addition to Psychology residency requirements, there are overall University residency requirements and other rules that depend on how many credits you transfer (such as how many WAC courses you need to take). To find out about these you should speak to a non-faculty advisor. You can find these advisors in your My Success Network in Starfish. Under each person's name you can see what type of advisor they are – look for an advisor that does *not* say “Faculty.” For this type of advising.

4.8 I do not believe that my instructor gave me a fair grade. What should I do?

Instructors do everything they can to assign grades fairly. This does not mean that they always give out high grades, nor are they expected to. Sometimes students earn lower grades than they expected to earn, and this is not necessarily unfair.

However, sometimes instructors make mistakes. They may calculate a grade incorrectly, or they may inadvertently use criteria different from that stated in the assignment or syllabus. In these cases, the first step is to discuss the issue with the instructor in a collegial and respectful manner. Approach your instructor one-on-one through email or in office hours to explain your concern. If, after such meetings or emails, you still believe that your grade is incorrect, you should then meet with the Chair of the Department of Psychology (see Section 4.9).

4.9 Can I talk to the Chair of the Department of Psychology? If so, how?

Your advisors should usually be your first point of contact with the Department of Psychology (see Section 3). However, if you feel that you need to meet with the Chair, visit <https://artsandsciences.csuohio.edu/psychology/meeting-request-with-psychology-chair> to request a meeting.

4.10 How can I stay connected with the Department of Psychology?

There are several ways to keep current with CSU's Department of Psychology.

First, we recommend that you visit our website regularly (<https://artsandsciences.csuohio.edu/psychology/psychology>). We will frequently post departmental news, advising information, etc. Additionally, we will soon be posting biographies and videos of current faculty and instructors.

Second, you should consider joining one or more of our undergraduate student organizations. Check out <https://artsandsciences.csuohio.edu/psychology/student-organization-csu> for full details, but we provide a brief description of each organization below:

- Black Scholars in Psychology (BSiP) is a new student organization established in Spring 2022. For those interested in learning more about this organization, including leadership opportunities, contact Dr. Tawana Jackson (Assistant College Lecturer in the Department of Psychology) at t.m.jackson24@csuohio.edu or text @blkpsych to 81010.
- The Collegiate Neuroscience Association (CNA) strives to be an educational and informational platform for undergraduate and graduate students on Cleveland State University's Campus. Members of the CNA will be exposed to various facets of neuroscience to better equip them to explore the vast magisterium that neuroscience has to offer. In addition, the CNA vows to provide information about research engagement, graduate school preparation, conference participation, holding a human brain, and other components of successful and holistic interaction with the field of neuroscience.
- Psi Chi (also see Section 5.3) is the National Honor Society in Psychology, founded in 1929 for the purposes of encouraging, stimulating, and maintaining excellence in scholarship, and advancing the science of psychology. Membership is open to graduate and undergraduate students with a declared psychology major or minor and who have completed at least 3 semesters of full-time college coursework. Undergraduate students must also have a

minimum 3.0 grade point average (GPA) in Psychology courses and have earned a cumulative GPA that is in the top 35% of their graduating class (Usually higher than 3.3).

- The Psychology Club is an all-inclusive psychology organization committed to engaging its members and the university's Psychology Department in meaningful experiences related to the discipline. Membership is open to graduate and undergraduate students with an interest in psychology. Prospective members do not need to be pursuing a degree in psychology. Members of the Psych Club will learn about the different subdisciplines of psychology to better prepare them to explore the many opportunities that the field has to offer. In addition, the Psych Club provides information and resources pertaining to research engagement, graduate school preparation, conference participation, undergraduate involvement, podcast interviews, and other activities and opportunities that are related to psychology.

Third, please follow us on social media. Our Facebook page can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/Department-of-Psychology-Cleveland-State-University-112074615506579/> and our Twitter handle is [_@PSYCSU1](#).

5 What can you tell me about the Psychology Honors Program and Honors Societies?

5.1 What is the Psychology Honors Program?

The Psychology Honors Program is particularly appropriate for psychology majors with strong academic records who want additional exposure to the research process. Graduation with Honors in Psychology reflects a student's independence, commitment to the field, and expertise in a specialized area. Completion of the program may be advantageous to students applying to graduate or professional programs. In past years, honors students have presented their research at regional and national research conferences.

Psychology Honors differs from University Scholars and University Honors, although there may be overlapping coursework. You do not need to be a University Honors or University Scholars student to be a Psychology Honors student. If you are a University Honors or University Scholars student, check with the Honors College to see how best to integrate Psychology Honors into your requirements.

Every student in the program registers for Psychology 495H: Honors Seminar in the Spring semester of the year prior to graduating: One of the goals of this course is to develop a research proposal. Each student must then choose one of two options to complete the program:

1. Thesis option. After completing PSY 495H, students following this track complete PSY 497H and PSY 498H. In this track, students work one-on-one with a professor to complete and defend the research project developed in PSY 495H. Note that PSY 498H is both a WAC and a Capstone course.
2. Non-thesis option. After completing PSY 495H, students following this track complete 6 credits of graduate-level coursework. Students in this track, like all other psychology majors, will be required to complete either PSY 412 or PSY 415 in order to satisfy their Capstone requirement.

5.2 How do I become a Psychology Honors Student?

If you are in the University Honors or Scholars program, you are already a Psychology Honors student.

If you are not in either of these programs, you may apply for admission to the department honors program: To be admitted, your GPA must be at least 3.3 and you must have completed PSY 317 (or equivalent) and PSY 312. (If you have completed PSY 317, you may ask the instructor of PSY 495H for permission to enroll in PSY 312 in spite of your not having completed PSY 312. If they approve, you would take PSY 312 concurrently with PSY 495H).

If you are interested in this program, have the required GPA, and have completed the required prerequisite courses, you should print an application from the Department of Psychology website, fill it out, and submit it before the deadline near the end of the Fall semester. Note that meeting the prerequisites does not guarantee admission into the program. You will find out about your application before the end of Finals Week. (If you are admitted through this mechanism, you will be given permission to register for PSY 495H and will have to organize your spring schedule to accommodate this course.)

5.3 What is Psi Chi?

Psi Chi is the National Honor Society in Psychology, founded in 1929 for the purposes of encouraging, stimulating, and maintaining excellence in scholarship, and advancing the science of psychology. Membership is open to graduate and undergraduate students with a declared psychology major or minor and who have completed at least 3 semesters of full-time college coursework. Undergraduate students must also have a minimum 3.0 grade point average (GPA) in Psychology courses and have earned a cumulative GPA that is in the top 35% of their graduating class (Usually higher than 3.3). Interested students can find an application at <https://artsandsciences.csuohio.edu/psychology/student-organization-csu> .

Although applications will be accepted at any time, the due date for Fall Induction is October 15 and for Spring Induction is March 1. Applications will be retained by the faculty advisor and re-reviewed each semester if one is not immediately eligible. If qualified, students will then complete the online international application and pay a one-time lifetime membership fee. Psi Chi is a member of the Association of College Honor Societies and is an affiliate of the American Psychological Association (APA) and the American Psychological Society (APS).

6. I think I want to go to graduate school in psychology. How does that work?

It's great that you're thinking about graduate school in psychology. Although an undergraduate psychology degree can prepare you to work in various occupations, the actual 'practice' of psychology usually requires at least a master's degree. Thus, many psychology majors who want professional careers in psychology consider going to graduate school in psychology as a way to continue in a field that interests them.

Below, we introduce some of what you need to know and think about so that you can make decisions about graduate school in psychology. However, you will have more questions than can be answered here, and we strongly recommend that you work with a psychology professor as you start this process. To connect yourself with an appropriate faculty member, see section 3.4 of this *Handbook*.

6.1 What's graduate school like? Is it for me?

That's a hard question to answer, because there are many different types of graduate schools. For instance, some schools emphasize research whereas others emphasize the practice of psychology.

In general, graduate school will probably seem like a combination of school and a job. That is, you'll still be taking classes, but you'll start to cross the line from student to professional. Your classes will have more relevance to your chosen area of specialty, and class projects will increasingly resemble what you'll do after you graduate. Furthermore, your education will not be confined to just the classes you're taking. In most programs, you'll be expected to be engaged in research or other professional activity outside the classroom – even if it doesn't 'count' for any type of credit.

To find out if graduate school is going to be a good fit for you (and whether particular graduate schools are good fits), we strongly recommend that you work with a psychology professor. To connect yourself with an appropriate faculty member, see Section 3.4 of this *Handbook*.

6.2 What are graduate schools looking for?

As discussed above, the wide variety of graduate schools makes it hard to say exactly what each school is looking for. You should definitely do your own research before applying to a particular school. We also strongly encourage you to work with a psychology professor. To connect yourself with an appropriate faculty member, see Section 3.4 of this *Handbook*.

In general, however, most graduate schools are looking for students with characteristics that include:

- **Ability:** Graduate schools want to make sure that you can handle the coursework before you start. Therefore, they'll be looking for some indication of your academic aptitude. They look to three primary sources for this information:
 - **Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores.** Aptitude tests such as the GRE have been demonstrated to predict success in graduate school. Some graduate schools rely heavily on GRE scores and will use minimum GRE scores as one of their first steps in screening out applicants. Additionally, different programs will emphasize different parts of the GRE, so it's important to do well on all areas of the GRE. Note a recent trend: Some graduate programs have decided to deemphasize the GRE or to make it optional (or to not ask for it at all). Prior to taking the GRE, you should do some research to find out whether the programs you wish to apply to require it.
 - **Grade Point Average (GPA).** Graduate programs look at how you performed in your undergraduate career as a way to predict how you'll do in graduate school. Some programs look at how students have done in particular courses (e.g., PSY 317; PSY 312; PSY 412; PSY 415).
 - **Letters of Recommendation.** Applicants frequently ask former instructors to discuss how they did in their courses. A strong letter from a former instructor may be able to explain a low GPA or GRE score, but this does not always work. Often, a faculty member with whom a student has worked on a research project is able to provide a fuller appraisal of a student's competencies than a faculty member who has had the student in a course.
- **Motivation:** Graduate schools want to know that you're truly committed to graduate school. They'll be looking for evidence that you've been involved in psychology and in particular in the area of psychology to which you're applying. Such evidence can include the specific courses you've taken as well as any extracurricular work that you've done (for instance, through independent study or through conducting research with a professor).
- **Fit:** Graduate schools want to know that you're a good fit. Some aspects of fit (such as ability) are discussed above. However, there are some additional aspects of fit that graduate schools may consider:
 - **Fit with graduate school.** Graduate schools want to know that you'll be happy and productive doing the things that graduate students do.

Thus, they'll be looking for evidence that you enjoy taking classes, participating in discussions, and also (for many programs) doing research and analyzing data. One good way to demonstrate this kind of fit is by highlighting the research experience you got while an undergraduate. Your undergraduate research experience need not be specific to the particular area you're applying to. For instance, a graduate school in Industrial-Organizational (I-O) psychology might look favorably upon an applicant who has successfully conducted research in Clinical psychology as an undergraduate but who has decided to pursue I-O as a career.

- **Fit with the particular area of psychology.** Graduate schools want to know that you've given particular thought to the type of psychology that you want to study. They'll be expecting you to describe why the topic is a good fit for you, as well as evidence of your interest in this area (again, through things like independent study or through conducting research with a professor).
- **Fit with that particular graduate school.** Graduate schools want to know that you've done your homework. If you're truly interested in a particular school and program, you'll be able to say why. Each program will be looking for evidence that you have thought about your fit with that program, and could see yourself working with particular professors on the topics that they're interested in pursuing.

6.3 What's the timeline for applying to graduate school?

There's no set timeline for applying to graduate schools. Starting early is recommended because it gives you time to explore options and to prepare the best application. However, as most graduate schools have roughly the same timeline (including the fact that most of them start in the fall and do not admit students in the spring), we can offer a basic timeline below. In the timeline, note that "senior year" refers to the last year that you'll be an undergraduate, even if you'll technically spend more than one year as a senior. Likewise, "junior year" refers to your second-to-last year as an undergraduate.

This timeline assumes that most graduate programs have deadlines in early January. Some graduate programs have deadlines before or after that, so you may need to adjust your own timeline accordingly. (For example, the deadline for applying to the Ohio State psychology Ph.D. program is December 1.)

- Your junior year, or even before: Prepare for graduate school. Several activities can benefit you during this time:
 - Succeeding in your classes.
 - Developing relationships with several individuals (usually professors) who will eventually be able to write strong letters of recommendation on your behalf. While merely participating in class may be useful along these lines, stronger graduate school applicants typically go beyond this – usually through participation in the professors' research programs. You may want to get involved in faculty research (see Section 4.4.4 of this *Handbook*).
 - Deciding on a field of graduate study. In graduate school, you'll specialize in a particular area of psychology. This is your time to explore the different areas of psychology and decide on the one that's the best match for your skills and interests. Consider exploring a broad range of undergraduate psychology courses to make sure you're making the right choice.
 - Anticipate taking the GRE. Some students benefit from systematic preparation for the GRE; this is best accomplished by allocating a few minutes per day over an extended period (e.g., a year) to answering GRE-type questions. Note a recent trend: Some graduate programs have decided to deemphasize the GRE or to make it optional (or to not ask for it at all). Prior to taking the GRE, you should do some research to find out whether the programs you wish to apply to require it.
- The summer before your senior year:
 - Decide on the schools you want to apply to. See Section 6.4 of this *Handbook* for some guidance.
 - Contact professors and other individuals who might write you strong letters of recommendation. Most graduate programs require two or three letters of recommendation. See Section 6.5 of this *Handbook* for some guidance.
 - Take the GRE. You will get your scores on most parts of the GRE quickly. However, the writing portion can take several weeks to grade. You'll want to take the test early enough so that your scores will get to the graduate programs by their deadlines. Additionally, if you're not satisfied with your first scores, you may want to allocate time to retake the GRE if you need to. Note a recent trend: Some graduate programs have decided to deemphasize the GRE or to make it optional (or to not

ask for it at all). Prior to taking the GRE, you should do some research to find out whether the programs you wish to apply to require it.

- September through November of your senior year: Work on your graduate applications. You've already chosen the schools you want to apply to and you've got letters of recommendation lined up. Now, it's time to finalize your application. This takes several forms:
 - Throughout the semester, you should write multiple drafts of your personal statement and get feedback from many individuals regarding how to improve it.
 - At least one month in advance of your first deadline, you should talk to potential writers of your letters of recommendation to make sure they will do so, and should provide them with materials that they will need. See Section 6.5 of this *Handbook* for information regarding the information they will need.
- November / December of your senior year (or earlier): Submit your applications to the graduate schools to which you applied.
- Spring of your senior year: Wait to hear back from the graduate schools to which you applied.

6.4 How do I find out about the graduate schools in my chosen field? How do I know which program is right for me?

Once you've decided on a field of study within psychology, you will need to find specific graduate programs to apply to. We strongly encourage you to develop a relationship with a CSU Psychology professor (particularly one in the same specialty) who can provide you with advice. To connect yourself with an appropriate faculty member, see Section 3.4 of this *Handbook*. In addition, your research might include the following:

- Books or websites listing graduate programs by specialty. Many such lists exist – some of which can be found on the CSU Department of Psychology website.
- Program rankings. Many specialties in psychology are ranked by outlets such as *US News and World Report*, as well as other journals specific to the specialty. These rankings can tell you something about the quality of the program. However, not all ranking systems are the same, and it's important that you investigate the criteria that they use and determine whether those are the same criteria that you find important.

- Research on specific programs. You should visit the websites of the programs in question and see how they describe themselves. In order to determine the fit of your interests with their research, you might also want to do PsycINFO searches on their faculty to see what they've been publishing (be sure to look for recent publications because faculty interests change over time). If you're not familiar with PsycINFO, ask a professor or the Library for help.

6.5 How do I get letters of recommendation?

What's the proper etiquette for interacting with letter-writers?

As explained in Section 6.2 of this *Handbook*, graduate schools are looking for evidence that you are a good fit for their program, and they are particularly interested in your academic and research skills. Letters of recommendation from reputable individuals (such as professors and internship/work supervisors) are one source of information that these schools will use. Therefore, it's important that you select your letter-writers carefully. You'll want to find letter-writers who can provide strong evidence for your fit with a graduate school career.

To figure out who might make a good letter writer, reread Section 6.2 and then think back over the course of your undergraduate career. Think first about professors whose research you have helped with, as they can provide good, detailed information on several of the characteristics outlined in Section 6.2. Additionally, think about professors who know you well, and in whose classes you've performed well – particularly if the assignments in their courses could provide solid evidence for your graduate school potential.

Once you've created a list of such individuals, it's time to ask them for help. Phone or email requests are appropriate, but it might also be useful to stop by during their office hours to ask for their help. If you haven't talked to the professor in a while, you should be prepared to list specifically which classes (and semesters) the professor has had you in class. Additionally, note that when you ask for professors to write you a letter of recommendation it's important that you ask whether they can write a 'positive' letter of recommendation. Many faculty members will not agree to write a letter that is not positive, but some might. You probably don't want a letter from someone who was not impressed by your performance!

Once the professor has agreed to write a letter, it's a good idea to ask what kinds of information the professor would like to have before writing. Usually, this would include a list of courses you've taken from the professor, but might also include the statement you have prepared as part of your application or a resume describing your other activities. Make sure that you provide this information in

your packet. Often, a letter writer will want to have a conversation with you about your hopes, dreams, goals, and aspirations.

Once you've secured your letter-writers, you'll want to provide them with a list of the graduate programs you're applying to, as well as your personal statement (or most recent draft; see Section 6.6. of this Handbook). You should do this at least one month in advance of the deadline, to give your writers enough time to collect their thoughts and write you a good letter.

What should go into a personal statement? Section 6.2 of this *Handbook* describes the characteristics that graduate schools are seeking in a good applicant. Your personal statement, then, should demonstrate those characteristics. You should highlight your ability, motivation, fit with a graduate school lifestyle, and fit with the graduate programs to which you have applied.

Try to back up your statements with specific evidence if at all possible. For instance, every graduate student applicant can say "I'm very interested in Clinical Psychology" to demonstrate fit with the profession. However, the best personal statements can back up that statement with specific behaviors and activities. In other words, don't just say that you're interested, but write about how that interest has manifested itself through volunteering to assist with Clinical research or through other independent studies or readings in Clinical Psychology. Likewise, demonstrate your fit with a graduate school career by discussing the graduate-school-like activities (such as research) you've engaged in, and describe your positive reaction to those experiences.

As you work on drafts of your personal statement, it's important that you get feedback from many individuals. This is one of the most important documents you'll write, so make sure that you get the most constructive criticism you can find. Expect to write many drafts until you create one that best captures your ability, motivation, and fit.

6.6 Does CSU have graduate programs in psychology? What are they?

The CSU Department of Psychology offers three different graduate degrees. The **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** degree in Adult Development & Aging is awarded upon completion of a research-oriented program of study that prepares students for careers as researchers and higher education faculty; this degree is offered jointly with the Department of Psychology at the University of Akron.

The Department also offers the **Psychology Specialist (Psy.S.)** degree, which is open to students who have completed the School Psychology specialization of the M.A. degree.

The **Master of Arts (M.A.)** degree is available in four different specializations: Clinical Psychology; Industrial and Organizational Research; Psychological Science, and School Psychology. Each specialization offers a unique curriculum that includes required and (for some specializations) elective courses; seminars; and field and/or research experiences. Psychological Science students are required to write a thesis; for other specializations (Clinical, Industrial-Organizational Research), writing a thesis is optional. Students enrolled in the School Psychology program do not write a thesis, but they have other opportunities to participate in faculty-led research. All M.A. specializations are designed so that all requirements can be completed within a two-year timeframe. (The School Psychology program also entails a third year of study for the Psychology Specialist degree.)

In addition to these graduate degree programs, there are a limited number of opportunities for students to register for graduate courses in Psychology on a transient or non-degree admission basis. For information on these opportunities, visit the Department of Psychology website.