

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)

HOW DO I KNOW IF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY IS THE BEST TYPE OF TRAINING FOR ME? Clinical psychologists serve in many roles as they work to alleviate a wide range of mental, emotional, and behavioral symptoms in varied settings (see www.div12.org or www.clinicalchildpsychology.org). There are two types of doctoral degrees in clinical psychology. University-based Ph.D. programs (<http://www.cudcp.us>) emphasize doctoral level training in conducting research as well as provision and evaluation of clinical services. Psy.D. programs, which are most often housed within free-standing professional schools, (<http://ncspp.info/students.htm>) emphasize training to practice psychology at the doctoral level. Related fields that offer doctoral level training are counseling psychology and educational psychology. If you are not primarily interested in doctoral level research training, your goals might be better met by programs that emphasize practice or by masters level programs such as the MSW in Social Work (<http://www.socialworkers.org>), the MPH in Public Health, a Masters in School Psychology or a terminal masters program in psychology or counseling. 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 from each particular program.

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. 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 (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?** Many clinical psychology doctoral programs accept fewer than 15 students each year; be cautious when considering programs that accept larger classes as student-faculty ratios are important in determining the quality of training and clinical supervision you will receive, student success in obtaining an internship, and graduates' performance on the national 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 doctoral clinical programs charge \$10,000-\$30,000 tuition each year. 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. Your debt load will increase considerably if it takes many years to obtain your degree; check data on the average length of time to graduate. Look at data from a career counseling center to learn about starting salaries for mental health professionals. More information is available at: <http://www.apa.org/workforce/presentations/2009-employment-landscape.pdf>.
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?** The web link (<http://www.asppb.net>) provides the pass rate for each doctoral clinical psychology program on the national licensing exam (EPPP) for each year since 2005. You must pass the licensing exam and meet specific criteria for postdoctoral supervision hours (which differ somewhat across states) to become licensed to practice independently as a clinical psychologist.

WHAT ARE MY CHANCES OF GETTING INTO A CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL PROGRAM? Many Ph.D. programs receive over 200 applications and accept only 2-10% 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 that also offer excellent training and will allow you to participate in a helping profession and make an 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/education/grad/careerguidance.aspx>
- <http://www-usr.rider.edu/~suler/gradschl.html>
- <http://forums.studentdoctor.net/showthread.php?t=489204>
- http://www.clinicalchildpsychology.org/student_info/
- <http://www.abct.org/Professionals/?m=mPro&fa=GettingGraduate>
- <http://www.uni.edu/walsh/linda2.html>
- <http://www.unc.edu/~mjp1970/Mitch%27s%20Grad%20School%20Advice.pdf>