



# Framingham

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# State University

Framingham State University  
Psychology Department  
100 State Street  
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Framingham, MA 01701

## Welcome!

Welcome to Framingham State University and the Department of Psychology & Philosophy. This handbook has been prepared to guide you through the requirements of a major in psychology. Suggestions for making the most of your college years and preparing for employment and/or graduate opportunities have also been included. Additionally, as a psychology major, you will be assigned an academic advisor by the psychology department Chair. Your advisor will be available during office hours and by appointment to help you plan your academic career, select courses, monitor your progress toward graduation, assist you in dealing with academic difficulties, and discuss your goals. A wise student will make use not only of the information provided in this handbook, but also of the many resources available on the FSU campus.

We look forward to working with you!

*The Psychology & Philosophy Department Faculty*



*Fall 2019*

Written by Dr. Pamela Ludemann, edited by Dr. Phoebe Lin

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# *Part I*

## *Departmental Issues*

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## Psychology Major Requirements

It is very important that students retain the University catalog of their year of enrollment at FSU. This catalog describes all the graduation requirements. Should requirements change between enrollment year and graduation, the student will **not** be expected to meet the new requirements. Below is an overview of basic requirements. (Refer to your University catalog for General Education requirements.)

A. **Core Courses:** All majors will complete the following five (5) requirements:

<b>PSYC 101</b> General Psychology or <b>PSYC 200</b> Psychology of Development*
<b>PSYC 291</b> Research I: Descriptive and Correlational Research Methods**
<b>PSYC 391</b> Research II: Quasi-Experimental and Experimental Research Methods**
<b>Two of the following 400 level Capstone Courses**</b> <b>PSYC 450</b> Empirical Research Thesis in Psychology <b>PSYC 460</b> History and Systems in Psychology <b>PSYC 480</b> Psychology Seminar <b>PSYC 495</b> Internship in Psychology

\*Note: Only Coordinate Education Majors may substitute PSYC 200 for PSYC 101

\*\* Note: A passing grade of C- is required to move through this sequence

B. **Non-Psychology** course requirements:

-**Biol 142** Introduction to Human Biology (*Gen. Ed. Domain II-B, Lab*) **or** Chem 131 Science-Environment & Health (*Gen. Ed. Domain II-B, Lab*)

-**Math 117** Introduction to Statistics (*Domain II-A*)

-**Phil 102** Introduction to Ethics (*Domain III-C*) **or** **Phil 105** Introduction to Political & Social Philosophy (*Domain III-B*), **or** **Phil 118** Introduction to Philosophy of Science (*Domain I-B*)

C. **Psychology Concentration:** 7 (4 domain courses + 3 upper-level electives)

**Domain Courses:** All majors will take one course in each of four domains of psychological knowledge (4 courses total):

<b>Biological Domain</b>	One of the following: NEUR 225 Biopsychology PSYC 245 Health Psychology PSYC 280 Sensation & Perception
<b>Developmental Domain</b>	One of the following: PSYC 200 Psychology of Development PSYC 201 Child Development PSYC 212 Adolescent Development PSYC 231 Adult Development

<b>Learning &amp; Cognition Domain</b>	<u>One of the following:</u> PSYC 236 Psychology of Learning PSYC 263 Cognitive Psychology PSYC 271 Behavior Modification
<b>Sociocultural Domain</b>	<u>One of the following:</u> PSYC 215 Personality Psychology PSYC 224 Social Psychology PSYC 259 Cultural Psychology PSYC 286 Psychology of Women

**Upper Level Electives:** All majors will complete three (3) additional upper-level Psychology courses (300 and/or 400 level). The choice is up to the student. It is recommended that students consult with their advisors to select upper-level courses.

<b>Elective 1</b> PSYC 3xx or 4xx
<b>Elective 2</b> PSYC 3xx or 4xx
<b>Elective 3</b> PSYC 3xx or 4xx

## Becoming A Major

1. ***If I'm undeclared or have a non-psychology major, can I switch my major to psychology?***  
Students who do not enroll with psychology as their indicated major must apply to become a major. Doing so requires meeting University requirements. The change of major form is available at the Student Center or online (see link below). Complete the form and obtain all necessary signatures.
2. ***What if I complete most of the courses required of a psychology major and don't ever apply to be a major. Wouldn't I still be able to complete my degree?***  
No. In fact, getting into courses indicated as "for majors only" is not possible. "Back-dooring" your way into completing the major is generally not viewed favorably by faculty!

Go here for more information and a link to the change of major form:

<https://www.framingham.edu/academics/registrar/frequently-asked-questions/index#How%20do%20I%20change%20or%20declare%20a%20major?>

Common Student Questions:

1. ***Do I need to select a concentration?***

No, all students complete the same concentration but do so by selecting courses of interest from each of the 4 domains and then 3 preferred upper level courses. Students may create their own version of former concentrations in developmental, educational, and other areas. Talk with your advisor about course selection options to create the experiences you are looking for.

2. ***Does it really matter which Capstone courses I complete as a Junior/Senior?***

Students' interests, career goals, and course availability impact which two are completed. To complete **Thesis**, a student must prepare a proposal during the first 2 research courses that is "doable" during a 15 week semester and acceptable to the Thesis instructor. Alternately, students interested in Thesis might talk with the instructor about getting involved in his/her ongoing research for credit, a strong feature for graduate school applications. **Seminar** will require development of some level of expertise on a specialized topic (chosen by the instructor) in psychology – a major paper/project/presentation is required. **Internship** will involve field work as well as classroom hours, a final paper/project/presentation is required. **History & Systems** is an upper-level course covering the origins of psychology as a discipline up through modern day perspectives. This course typically requires that students complete a major paper/project/presentation.

3. ***Do I really need to earn a C- or better in the research courses to graduate?***

Absolutely! In fact, majors not earning a C- in Research Methods I may not enroll in Research Methods II. Similarly, earning less than a C- in Research Methods II will affect enrollment in any Capstone. Capstones must also be passed with a C- or better to graduate as a psychology major. When students fail any of these courses, there is no guarantee of a seat in future sections.

The best advice is to take these courses seriously and pass the first time! These are among the more demanding courses completed by psychology majors but also the most valuable in preparing for graduate school and employment. All students will learn statistical analyses, how to conduct thorough literature searches using professional databases, APA writing, and professional presentation formats. These are invaluable skills to learn and practice.

3. ***If I became a psychology major before Fall of 2011, do I have to meet these new requirements?***

Yes and No – it depends on where you were in May 2011 in completing the research requirements. Students already in the old sequence will complete the former concentration based psychology requirements. All newly enrolled students, as of Fall 2011, and students who had not yet started the research sequence as of Fall 2011 must complete the new Domain-based major requirements. General Education requirements for all majors have not changed.

4. ***As an evening student, am I also affected by these requirement changes?***

YES – the same conditions apply. Students who were already enrolled in the research sequence in May 2011 will complete the former concentration based major. Majors, new and former, who were not enrolled in the research sequence in Spring 2011 must complete the new requirements. Unfortunately, due to low student-demand, some course options may not be offered – such as Internship and Thesis. It may be possible to arrange for Directed Studies to complete comparable requirements with instructor and Chair pre-approval.

## Advising

### Registrar Responsibilities:

The office of the registrar is responsible for several administrative tasks related to advising.

1. The registrar is the only one able to decide if a transfer course will be accepted by the University and its value (1 credit or .5 typically).
2. The registrar maintains updated copies of student transcripts and provides them to advisors.
3. The registrar monitors students' completion of General Education requirements.
4. The registrar provides copies of course offerings and arranges the time period during which students are to meet with advisors before their registration dates. Students will receive notices in the mail of their registration dates midway into each semester.
5. The registrar maintains all forms pertaining to transfer credits, add/drops, and changes of majors, minors, and concentrations.
6. The registrar performs final credit hours evaluations for graduation. Letters indicating credits toward graduation are mailed to seniors.

### Advisor Responsibilities:

1. Your advisor will contact you with instructions on how to schedule a meeting during the appropriate point during the semester.
2. Your advisor will review your course progress with you, including completion of General Education and major requirements, and the fulfillment of other graduation requirements (e.g., electives, field studies, internships, labs).
3. Your advisor will recommend courses and sequences of courses to best meet your graduation requirements. However, your advisor cannot guarantee your ability to enroll in the courses suggested.
4. Your advisor will also provide you with a PIN, needed to register for classes. Making an appointment is the only way you will get this!
5. Two to three semesters before you complete the 32 credits required for graduation, your advisor will review any specific course deficits indicated on your senior audit.
6. As needed, your advisor will consult with the department chair when course waivers or substitutes seem appropriate.
7. All faculty are required to hold a minimum of 3 office hours per week. Additionally, appointments may be made to meet with your advisor or instructors.



### Student Responsibilities:

1. It is your responsibility to make time to meet with your advisor at least once per semester. **Do not expect to drop in during advising weeks.** Make an appointment! Be sure to come during your assigned week – based on the number of course credits completed.
2. Review the course offerings, your course needs, and fit of the course times/dates with your other responsibilities.
3. Be aware of your specific year of enrollment course requirements. Your advisor deals with 30+ advisees every semester and an assortment of entry years. It is very unlikely that your advisor has memorized every University catalog.
4. Be aware of course prerequisites. When class lists are checked, students will be removed from courses for which prerequisites have not been completed with a passing grade.
5. As appropriate, be aware of requirements for fulfilling minors. Your advisor is unlikely to know all the specifics for completing all minors offered at FSU. It is the student's responsibility to check with the chairs of appropriate departments if unsure of their progress toward completing a minor.
6. Arrive for your advising appointment on time and prepared with at least 2 acceptable course schedules. Courses frequently close and alternative schedules must be considered. Course time blocks must not overlap.
7. When you get your PIN from your advisor, do NOT lose it! It is needed to register and also to make any changes during the Add/Drop period.

## Commonly Asked Advising Questions:

### Your Advisor

1. ***Who determines which advisor I must see?***  
The department chair assigns students to advisors. The process is largely based on availability.
2. ***Is it possible to request a specific advisor?***  
Maybe. If a specific advisor is wanted, the student should contact the chair. Should the desired advisor have an opening, it may be possible for a change of advisor. However, given the number of psychology majors, most advisors have full loads. Advisors may not make switches themselves.

### Recommended Course Sequences

1. ***Is there a “best” sequence for completing the psychology courses?***  
There are many routes to completing requirements. Some suggestions are:
  - a. 100- & 200-level courses should be taken before 3/400-level courses. Many upper-level courses have prerequisites, are reserved for juniors/seniors, and have fewer seats (20). These features make upper-level courses difficult to get into until the end of college.
  - b. During the first 2 years, students should complete General Psychology, non-psychology requirements, and a few 200-level psychology courses to prepare for the Core Psychology courses.
  - c. No later than the second semester of sophomore year, students should complete the statistics requirement. It is recommended that students fulfill this requirement as early as possible given that statistics is a **prerequisite** for the research methods sequence.
  - d. No later than the junior year, students should complete the research methods sequence (PSYC 291 and 391).
  - e. During the late junior & senior semesters majors should plan to enroll in their capstones.
  - f. Save some General Education courses for semesters in which Research Methods and the Capstones will be taken. These are very demanding psychology courses.
  - h. It is strongly recommended that students complete Introduction to Human Biology before enrolling in the research courses. The time needed for meeting the biology lab requirements and the demands of the research courses will be difficult to manage together.
2. ***May I take several of the Core Psychology courses in the same semester?***  
No. Most of the Core courses have prerequisites. General Psychology must be completed before any of the other Core courses may be taken. Research Methods I is the prerequisite for Research Methods II. Research Methods II is the prerequisite for capstones.



### Transferring Courses

1. ***Can I complete some of my requirements at other colleges during summers and transfer the credits to FSU?***  
Yes, but there are several issues to consider.
  - a. You can transfer up to three-quarters of your course credits and still graduate with a degree from FSU. However, Core Psychology courses may not be transferred for credit towards the psychology major once enrolled at FSU. Students who enroll at FSU for the first time as transfer students are sometimes able to meet a minimal number of Core Psychology classes in this way. Typically, only General Psychology credit is granted in transfer-student situations and, in rare instances, Research Methods I. The chair makes all such decisions.
  - b. Some courses that are 300-level at FSU and fulfill concentration requirements may not transfer as 300-level. In such a case, the transfer course, despite its title, will not satisfy the requirements of the major.

- c. Complete all of the registrar's transfer approval forms **before** taking any off-campus course! Taking a course without doing so may result in non-transference of the credits.
- d. Students must have earned a C or better in a course to be granted transfer credit at FSU.

2. ***Can I fulfill some requirements through FSU's Evening, Summer, or Intersession programs?***

Yes, but such courses do **not** count as part of the full-time day school course load. If enrolled as a day student, enrollment in an evening class will result in additional tuition costs. When such courses are completed, they will appear on your FSU transcripts.

### **Course Overloads**

1. ***Can I take extra courses through the evening school while I am a full-time day student?***

Under certain circumstances it is possible. Only students with GPA's of 3.0 and who obtain approval from their advisors and the department chair are permitted to enroll in a 5th course. This includes courses taken from the day school, evening school, or on other college or university campuses.

2. ***If I meet those requirements, it is recommended?***

Typically, no. Carrying 5 courses in a semester is very difficult. Anyone planning to do so should be selecting courses that are less demanding. Taking a fifth course is not a good way to raise a GPA or maintain an already good one. Students taking too many courses often do poorly in all of them. The end result may be the lowering of a student's overall GPA.

### **Minors**

1. ***Can I complete a minor?***

Yes. As psychology majors, students have 8 free electives and 12 General Education courses to complete. It is very possible to complete a minor if you plan ahead. Check your University catalog for available minors within the various academic departments.

a. If you decide on a minor:

- 1. Inform your advisor.
- 2. Get a "change of major form" from the registrar and complete the portion on minors.
- 3. Be sure to get all appropriate signatures before returning the form to the registrar.

b. Common minors of psychology majors:

- 1. **Art** – enables students wanting a creative outlet to develop one and perhaps eventually combine talents with a career in psychology (e.g., art therapy).
- 2. **Biology** – allows students to combine their psychological perspectives with biological ones. Requires completion of introductory biology and chemistry laboratory courses, plus 3 approved biology courses.
- 3. **Business** – allows students to gain a clear sense of business-related issues. Requires completion of either 12.101 Principles of Macroeconomics & 12.102 Principles of Microeconomics, plus three economics electives.
- 4. **Economics** – allows students to gain knowledge of world-wide economic issues. Requires completion of either 12.101 Principles of Macroeconomics or 12.102 Principles of Microeconomics, plus 4 course representing 3 business sub-areas.
- 5. **English** – enables students to further improve their writing skills and literary understandings. Requires completion of 21.102 Essentials of Writing, plus 5 acceptable English courses.
- 6. **Sociology** – provides a means of adding courses on criminal behavior, family systems, and ethnicity. Requires completion of 52.101 Principles of Sociology, plus 4 other approved sociology courses.
- 7. **Spanish or French** – enable students to become fluent in a new language. Require a minimum of 5 courses in the specific language area.

## Specialty Courses

1. ***If I'm hoping to someday go to graduate school, are there any additional courses I should take as I complete my electives?***

There are some courses unique to the psychology department that can help you distinguish yourself as a candidate. Be sure to refer to your University catalog for course specifics and prerequisites.

- a. Psyc 345 Directed Study in Psychology. This course is often used by students who desire to study a specialty topic in depth, learn a skill, or to conduct guided research.
- b. Psyc 490 Advanced Independent Study in Psychology. This course is for the advanced student who can work with a fair amount of independence. It is most often used by students who have completed research projects in Experimental Psychology and would like an opportunity to pursue their projects further.
- c. Psyc 403 Practicum in Teaching of Psychology. This course provides students with an opportunity to work alongside a faculty member in the teaching of a course previously completed. TA's may be asked to hold office hours, help prepare exam materials, prepare and present lectures, and lead small groups.

2. ***Do I enroll in these specialty courses just like other courses during registration?***

No. It is important that interested students contact the faculty member with whom they are interested in working.

For the Directed and Independent Studies, students may have their own ideas for projects. In other cases, the faculty may have a topic in need of investigation, an ongoing research project in which students may participate, or an existing data set that needs to be analyzed. In all cases, the student should approach the faculty and discuss his/her interests. The faculty will then assess his/her own interests, availability, and expectations. If the faculty agrees to take on the student, they will work together to develop a contract, which must be presented to the chair for approval by December 1 for the spring semester and May 1 for the fall semester. If approved, the appropriate registrar forms must be completed and returned to the registrar during the add-drop period.

For the Teaching Practicum, faculty usually contact students about serving as a TA. Generally, students invited to earn course credit as TAs have shown exemplary abilities and understanding when completing the course themselves. Students may also approach faculty. The faculty will draw-up a "standard" teaching contract and develop a list of duties for earning a grade.

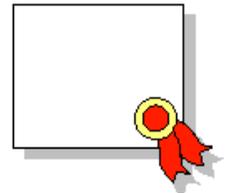
3. ***Is it possible that a faculty member would refuse a student's request?***

Definitely. With the exception of the Internship, faculty are not compensated for supervising student TAs or those enrolled in Directed or Independent Studies. Therefore, a faculty must consider not only the interested student's abilities and desires, but also his/her own ability to handle another commitment.

## Psychology Department Student Awards

Every spring, the psychology department awards select senior psychology majors certificates of achievement during the University's Awards Ceremony. Students graduating in December or May of the academic year from the day or night school may be nominated for the awards. The award criteria are:

- a. Academic Award – Presented to senior psychology majors who have shown exemplary effort and enthusiasm in meeting course requirements as demonstrated by behavior, preparation of written and/or oral assignments, and grades. Minimum overall and major grade point averages of 3.7.
- b. Research Award – Presented to senior psychology majors who have demonstrated clear understanding of the research process, from critically evaluating pertinent literature and designing a workable study to the statistical analysis of data and preparation of professional quality reports beyond course requirements. It must be evident that the students are capable of demonstrating a fair degree of rigor and independence in their research efforts, not including course requirements.
- c. Community Service Award - Presented to senior psychology majors who have demonstrated concern for the community over-and-above that required for course credit or a salary. The services provided have been evaluated in some way as exemplary in leadership, commitment, or innovation.



### Common Student Questions:

1. ***If I think I might be qualified for one of these awards, can I ask faculty to nominate me?***  
Yes. The faculty have access to seniors' GPAs. They are also usually well aware of students whose accomplishments meet the criteria of the academic and research awards. However, most faculty are not aware of students' extracurricular activities. For the community service award, it is very appropriate for students to inform their advisors, instructors, or the chair of their interest in being nominated. By mid-February, students should provide faculty with a list of their accomplishments.
2. ***What does receiving a departmental award mean?***  
It can mean a lot. Few students are nominated and then selected for the awards. Typically, 9 or fewer of the graduating psychology majors are presented with awards. If selected, it means you were well recognized by the faculty as outstanding. Receiving an award should be a clear message that you were appreciated as a student, researcher, or community participant. You should be proud of such an accomplishment.  
Nominees should attend the ceremony. They will receive letters of congratulations, with an invitation to the event. Bring family and friends along – it's free!
3. ***Are there other awards I might be nominated for on campus?***  
Yes. Many clubs and association on campus present awards to their most active and deserving members. Check with the Dean of Student Services for a list of possible awards. For scholarship information and applications visit the Financial Aid Office. Both offices are located in Dwight Hall.
4. ***What about off-campus honors?***  
In 1997-98, The Massachusetts Public Education System of Higher Education Conference on Undergraduate Research, Scholarly, Creative, and Public Service Activities expanded its format to include all undergraduate scholars in the Commonwealth. Submissions are competitively evaluated at two levels; by on campus faculty and a multi-institution faculty panel. Students whose submissions receive acceptance are invited to present their work in the spring.

## Faculty Expectations

### Attendance

- \* Although faculty vary their attendance policy, regular attendance is strongly recommended. Be sure to read syllabi carefully.
- \* Faculty will honor major religious holidays of all faiths by avoiding exams and such on those dates. When conflicts occur, speak with your instructors about possible alternatives.
- \* Notifying the Dean of Students of an absence does not necessarily mean that the faculty will reduce any absence penalties. Again, be sure to review your course syllabi for specifics. However, in cases of prolonged absences due to illnesses or personal matters, it is advisable to contact the Dean of Students. In turn, this office will send notices of your situation and your expected return date to your instructors. Be sure to see your instructors about the possibility of completing assignments upon your return to classes.

### Classroom Behavior

- \* Arrive to class on time.
- \* Complete reading and written assignments before class and within due dates.
- \* Do not hold conversations with friends during lectures. Side conversations and other interruptions are not appreciated when unrelated to course content or when inappropriately timed.
- \* Read and keep your syllabus! Double-check requirements regularly.
- \* Follow instructions when completing assignments, including page limits, formatting, and due dates.
- \* Ask for clarification or help as soon as a problem begins. Do not wait until the last minute.
- \* Anticipate 2 hours of homework for each hour of classroom time. Four courses = 16 hours of classroom time per week, plus as much as 32 hours of reading, writing, and studying! Full-time college and full-time employment are not recommended. Do not over-estimate your ability to learn and work!

### Ethics

- \* In some courses, assignments will involve collecting information about others. Informed consent and confidentiality are very important issues. Your instructors will discuss these issues and will require students to uphold the highest standards of professional behavior.
- \* The psychology department faculty will follow the University's procedures for handling infractions of academic honesty. Academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating) may be grounds for course failure or suspension/dismissal from the University. See your University catalog under "academic regulations" for more information.
- \* Plagiarism involves the failure to indicate the source of ideas or information. In not giving credit to your sources, you are claiming the ideas or information as your own. Plagiarism includes: copying from a source, paraphrasing a source, obtaining a paper or portion thereof from a source other than yourself (e.g., a peer, web site), purchasing a paper even if an original work, or any other means of completing a written assignment not of one's own efforts. Plagiarism is grounds for course failure and expulsion from college. <http://www.lib.umich.edu/libhome/ugl/plagiarism.html>
- \* Harassment will not be tolerated. Creating a hostile environment for a classmate can become grounds for dismissal and/or a lawsuit. We ask all students to be tolerant of attitude and learning style differences of our increasingly diverse campus population.

### Common Student Questions:

1. ***Is it hard to go to school full-time and still keep a job?***

Working while enrolled in college full-time is not advised. To get the most out of your education, you will need time to study, to participate in extra-curricular activities, and take advantage of opportunities available only to students. Every student should be thinking about activities that will impress employers and enhance skills and knowledge. Typically, it is not student-level employment positions that impress future employers. What employers look for are internships, specialty courses, participation in the college community (e.g., the student government, academic clubs), and indications of academic achievement (e.g., honor societies & awards). Engaging in such activities and doing well require time and flexible schedules. Attending classes and just getting by with studies so that work hours can be met is far from the ideal.



2. ***What if I have to work in order to afford college?***

College is a choice. Being a student is a full-time “job.” Students need to realize that they are investing time and money in their future earning potential and job satisfaction/outcomes. Doing well these four years will greatly impact students’ futures. Going to college may mean applying for loans, grants or work-study, borrowing from family members, and being poor. If you must work, work as few hours as possible to survive. If you must work full-time or near, consider going to college part-time or through the evening program. This may simply not be the time for college.



3. ***What if I pay for all my college expenses by credit card? Is that a good idea?***

Absolutely not! Credit card interest rates are typically 16-18%. Introductory rates for the first 5-6 months may be low, but that’s simply to lure people into using the cards. One of the consequences of credit cards being so available to everyone is over-spending. You do not want to go through college working many hours simply to pay monthly credit card debt. You also do not want to graduate so in debt that an end cannot be seen. College loans, in contrast, typically have low interest rates, monthly payments are usually small, and repayment does not begin until after graduation.

4. ***I hate oral presentations. Is it possible to avoid them as a psychology major?***

No. More and more, educators and employers are demanding that people be able to communicate well orally. Practice truly makes perfect in this case. The more students publicly present, the easier it gets. The majority of the upper-level psychology courses require individual or group oral presentations. Some may be a matter of minutes, others may require presenting for a fair portion of the class meeting. There are many ways to reduce your anxiety:

- Prepare early. Give yourself ample time to learn your topic. The better a topic is known, the easier the words will come out and make sense to you.
- Practice. Rehearse aloud to yourself and then to friends.
- Visit the room after-hours. Get comfortable looking at the room. Imagine your peers and instructor. Stand at the podium. Walk around.
- Use lots of appropriate visual aids. Dim lights can help hide a flushed face or sweaty brow – start with an overhead! Put your title up on the screen, followed by an outline of your information. If that’s not possible, prepare handouts – an outline at the least – start your talk by referring to the handout to get some of those eyes off of you!
- Relax before your talk begins – go to the bathroom, take deep breaths, close your eyes, arrive at class early...whatever it takes to calm you down.
- Wear your favorite nice clothing. When you dress comfortably, you will be able to relax more easily and feel more confident. It works the other way too – people who look nice are taken more seriously. You will look as if you know what you’re saying!
- Don’t sweat small mistakes. With the exception of maybe the instructor, no one will know if you make a mistake. Just keep going. If the error was an important point, come back to it as if you never said it before. If the instructor thinks it’s important to clarify the error, odds are

he/she will do it without drawing attention to what you said.

5. ***I have a hard time writing. How important is writing as a psychology major?***  
 Very. It's not just being a psychology major. As a college graduate, certain abilities and behaviors are expected. One of these is that you are more literate than the average person. In applying for jobs and to graduate school, your writing errors will be glaring! Once employed, you will forever be writing – letters, reports, minutes for meetings... the list is endless. You may never have to write another paper for a class, but you will be writing. Errors will be embarrassing and no longer just the cause of a few lost points. Take extra writing classes, pay attention to the editing your instructors provide, and/or take advantage of the services you pay for through your student fees. As a student, you have the luxury of many sources for writing help. Use them!
  
6. ***Where can I go for help with my writing?***  
 In the building housing CASA, the University has created the Writing Center. Free of charge, students may make appointments to meet with an instructor or trained tutor to review their writing. It is recommended that students experiencing a lot of difficulty go to the Center as soon as the semester starts. Bring your course requirements with you and any writing on which you have started to work. Students feeling they write fairly well may want to stop by and have a grammar check-up. Bring a paper you feel proud of and have someone find all your errors. A review of the mistakes you commonly make may be invaluable.
  - \* Sign-up sheets for Writing Center appointments may be made at CASA.
  - \* Appointments may be made on short notice (walk-ins) or by signing up for appointments several weeks in advance.
  
7. ***Is math important as a psychology major?***  
 Math is always important. Basics are used every day. However, the only specific requirement of the psychology major is a course in statistics. The statistics courses at FSU are tough. Talk to students who have completed the course and ask about their instructors. Try to find an instructor whose style of teaching fits with your learning style.
  
8. ***Are high grades really important?***  
 GPA's of at least 3.0 are often required for admission into graduate programs. However, when students do their best, seek appropriate help from professors, and show continued improvement, the effort is noticed. Effort may not guarantee high course grades or overall GPA's, but effort does show up in letters of recommendation. "Glowing" letters paired with good scores on standardized tests (GRE's) may still get students with mediocre GPAs into graduate programs or open doors to other desired opportunities. As a precaution, it wouldn't hurt the ambitious student to retake courses in which Ds and Fs were earned before graduating!

## Expressing Thanks

***What if there are faculty members I would like to thank for the knowledge they've shared or for the encouragement they've given? What can I do to express my thanks?***

There are a number of ways in which students can appropriately thank faculty members.

- a. Completing the class evaluation forms accurately and thoroughly is the simplest. The ratings on these forms do have some influence on instructors' yearly evaluations.
- b. Vote when the student government asks students to nominate and vote for the "faculty of the year" or any other accolades. Faculty do hear if they are nominated.
- c. Write a note:
  - \* to the professors you feel deserve recognition or thanks. Some students leave professors notes in their office mailboxes or drop them off at their offices.
  - \* to the department chair about why you feel as you do about a professor or about some experience.

Unsolicited notes of thanks are added to professors' promotion materials and carry significant weight. They also make the faculty feel good about the work they do.
- d. Tell faculty members you hope that they will be attending graduation and that you will be looking for them. Though graduation is clearly the students' day of celebration, it is also exciting for faculty to see their students graduate. Faculty who feel students value their attendance are more likely to show up for the occasion.
- e. Participate in the "senior evening of thanks". Give thanks publicly to faculty generally or specifically. Again, tell the faculty of your interest in their attending the ceremony.

***What if I would like to express thanks generally for my education and experiences at FSU?***

There are many ways to give thanks generally to the University. For instance:

- a. Large and small monetary gifts are always welcome by the Alumni Fund. Funds are used to enhance the academic resources of the University.
  - \* In the fall, alumni receive a fund-raising letter announcing the Fall Phonathon. During October-November, student representatives call, asking for pledges.
  - \* In the spring, mailings are sent to "Friends of the University," again asking for donations.
- b. Participation in the newly formed FASTNET. FSU Career Services have been asking interested Alumni to make themselves available to students interested in following in their footsteps. Interested alumni may be contacted by students and asked about the skills needed in their area of work, suggestions in obtaining valuable experiences before graduation, and their views of the pros and cons of their current careers. The willingness to accept and supervise student interns is always welcome.
- c. Should finances permit, large donations or endowments are welcome. Such large gifts may be set up for particular purposes of interest to the donor or given without restrictions.

## Filing a Complaint

Though it is hoped that student-faculty problems do not arise, some conflicts or differences of opinion are bound to occur from time to time. When problems do occur, it is asked that students seek assistance at a level appropriate to the seriousness of the issue. Keep in mind, that some courses will be very demanding, that your instructors will vary widely in their styles of teaching and expectations, and that you may not like everything about being in college. Without a doubt, some semesters you will feel overwhelmed. These are normal aspects of the college experience. So, before filing a complaint, examine how you feel and separate your frustrations from the actions of the faculty member at issue.



### ***What are the appropriate means for a student to file a complaint about a faculty member?***

There are several steps to take to handle appropriately a faculty-related problem. Administratively, it is appreciated when students follow the standard routine for filing course-related complaints.

1. Speak with the instructor first about the problem. Be specific about what concerns you. It is best to do this during office hours and not to approach instructors at the start or end of a class. Make an appointment with the instructor. If you are uncomfortable going alone, bring a classmate along. You might consider bringing some prepared notes with you.
2. If you are unable to approach the instructor or if you have tried and feel unheard, make an appointment to speak with the department chair. All complaints received by the chair must be brought to the attention of the instructor. The chair will describe the problem and suggest solutions, without providing names.
3. To file a more formal complaint, put your concerns in writing, addressed to the department chair. Written complaints will be retained by the chair, along with a written statement of the chair's attempts to resolve the problems. In your letter, stick to the facts, be precise, and provide documentation for as much as possible.
4. If the problem is still not resolved, make an appointment with the Dean of Undergraduate Education in CASA. Steps will be taken to resolve any problems.

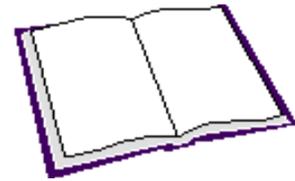
## *Part II*

# *Extracurricular Activities Recommended For Psychology Majors*

### The Psychology Club

The psychology club is part of student services and is controlled by the students. Club members, however, must invite a faculty member to serve as sponsor. Previous club members met monthly to discuss issues of interest, plan fundraisers and/or social activities, and hold elections.

- \* The faculty would very much like psychology club members to consider forming a new major student-mentor program and participating in department-related research activities.
- \* Psychology Club membership is something most students should indicate on their resumes. Leadership roles are particularly important to include.



### Psi Chi

Psi Chi is the International Honor Society in Psychology, involving more than 890 chapters, and is a member of the Association of University Honor Societies and an affiliate of the American Psychological Association and American Psychological Society). Psi Chi has two primary goals: provide academic recognition to inductees through membership and stimulate excellence in scholarship and professional growth. The organization provides programs to help achieve these goals, including conventions, research awards, certificate recognition programs, national and regional chapter awards, and service projects. The Psi Chi Journal of Undergraduate Research is also dedicated to the publication of student research. For more information, visit [www.psichi.org](http://www.psichi.org).

The FSU Psychology Department established a Psi Chapter in 2006. We encourage students to apply. Eligibility requirements are below. The deadline to apply is September 30 (for the fall term) and February 15 (for the spring term).



#### Undergraduate Student Eligibility Requirements:

- § Declared Psychology Major at Framingham State University (FSU)
- § Completion of at least 3 semesters of college coursework
- § Completion of at least 3 Psychology courses at FSU & at least a 3.25 GPA in FSU Psychology courses
- § At least a 3.25 cumulative GPA in all FSU courses

#### Graduate Student Eligibility Requirements:

- § Must be a matriculated student in the Framingham State University (FSU) Counseling Psychology program (i.e., accepted fully in the program and currently enrolled in courses)
- § Completion of at least 3 graduate-level Counseling Psychology courses at FSU
- § At least a 3.25 cumulative GPA in all graduate courses completed at FSU
- § Alumni Eligibility Requirements (for retroactive membership\*)
- § Graduated from FSU before January 2006\*
- § Graduated with all of the criteria listed above for undergraduate or graduate students

\* The FSU Psi Chi Chapter was established in April 2006. Per the national Psi Chi guidelines, only alumni who graduated before a chapter is established can apply for retroactive membership.

#### Student-Level Professional Memberships –

Many professional associations in psychology have reduced-cost student memberships. Membership is an indication that a student is serious about his/her field. Members often receive newsletters discussing critical issues in the field and upcoming events/conferences. Additionally, membership can be a means of obtaining reduced rates on journal subscriptions and conference registration fees. The following associations are recommended:

- New England Psychological Association (NEPA)**
- Eastern Psychological Association (EPA)**
- American Psychological Association (APA)**

#### The Greater Boston Area Undergraduate Conference –

Every late April/early May, the public colleges and universities of Massachusetts get together and present their students' research and other honor level works. Under the guidance of a faculty member, students may submit abstracts of their work in early spring. The papers are reviewed by faculty and comments for improvement are returned to students.

- Ask your research methods or experimental professors about presenting and assisting you.
- Presenting is a valuable experience and should be listed on your resume/vita.

#### FSU Day in May -

Every May, there is an on-campus presentation day for graduate and undergraduate students. Student present course projects, research, service trip experiences, art works, fashion designs and more. Across all the campus departments, students show their works. Application information is provided about mid-spring semester and due dates are clearly indicated.

- Ask your professors about the possibility of presenting and work with your instructors to prepare your application/submission and your presentation materials.

#### Regional & National Professional Conferences –

Students who conduct quality research are strongly encouraged to submit their papers for presentation at conferences. The Undergraduate Conference is a good starting place. However, with faculty sponsorship, submission to professional-level conferences is also possible. Poster formats are recommended. Conferences to consider seriously are:

- \* NEPA – hosting institutions are usually within an hour’s drive. The submission date is in early Spring. The conference date is mid-Fall.
- \* EPA – hosting institutions are usually within a day’s drive (east coast). The submission date is mid-Fall. The conference date is early Spring.
- \* APA – hosting institution is most often in a major city in North America. The submission date is late-Fall. The conference date is in August.

The psychology department often awards student presenters, who must travel outside the immediate area, a small research award (\$100-150) to cover some expenses. The psychology club may also approach the student government for additional funds. This must be done early in the Fall, before monies are depleted.

#### On-Campus Volunteer Activities –

This is not an exhaustive listing of possible on-campus activities. Instead, this is a list of activities that might help psychology majors distinguish themselves when applying to graduate schools or for employment. Some volunteer positions do require specific skills. Please check with program directors/supervisors for details and application procedures.

- \* Psychology Club leadership roles
- \* Psi Chi officer roles
- \* Black & Gold leader
- \* CASA tutor
- \* Center for Global Education volunteer
- \* Newman Club Community Service volunteer
- \* Gatepost staff member
- \* SUAB representative
- \* Class officer
- \* Computer Services volunteer
- \* Student Admissions Volunteer Programs



#### Study Aboard and Service Trips -

As with campus and local volunteering and experiences, traveling is an added bonus on FSUs campus. Be sure to attend Study Abroad Fairs and consider traveling with faculty to new locations and experience different cultures. Costs may be surprisingly affordable.

## *Part III*

# *Making the Most of your University Years*

## APA Writing Style

### ***What is APA style?***

Every psychology major is expected to master APA writing style. APA is the format required by many journals in psychology for publishing. When students enroll in the research methods sequence (or before), they are required to purchase the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. It may be purchased at anytime from most college or university bookstores, including FSU's. The manual explains the style of writing most common to professionals in the field of psychology. Specifics on appropriate language, referencing of information sources, and page formatting are provided.

### ***Once I graduate, will I ever use APA writing style again?***

Students planning for graduate school will definitely use their APA manuals. Many social science disciplines (e.g., social work, sociology) accept or require APA writing style as well. Graduate school or not, if students hope to someday publish or present at conferences, APA writing style is likely to come in handy. In the business world, there may not be a standard. However, having a clear means of citing sources and avoiding plagiarism is always a plus!

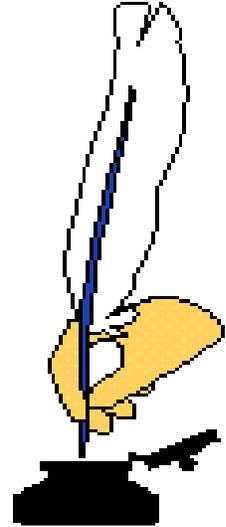
### ***So, should I buy the manual and read the whole thing?***

No, not really. It's a reference text students will want to keep wherever it is that they prepare papers. Since some students have trouble getting their ideas down in writing clearly and concisely, it might be worthwhile to read Chapter 2 – Expression of Ideas. This chapter provides an overview of writing style issues, grammar, and bias in language. The remainder of the manual is better used to address specific needs as they arise. For example, if unsure of whether or not abbreviations should be used in professional writing, check Chapter 3 and the section specifically on abbreviations.

### ***I've looked at the manual and tried to use it before. It's confusing. Any suggestions on how to understand the millions of rules better?***

With use, the manual gets easier and easier to use. Parts will become memorized! It is advisable that students place movable "tags" on pages referred to often. It's highly advisable that a tag be placed at the start of the research model. Aside from repeated use, there are many useful Websites in which students or instructors have attempted to simplify the basics. Below are a few of the many APA style-related listings on the Web:

- <http://www.apa.org/journals/faq.html> - frequently asked questions
- <http://www.gasou.edu/psychweb/tipsheet/paper.htm> - psych. Research paper
- <http://www.gasou.edu/psychweb/tipsheet/apacrib.htm> - crib sheet for APA
- <http://owl.trc.purdue.edu/files/34.html> - using APA format



## Planning Ahead

There are many things students can do that will make life after college easier. For most graduates, the next stage means the beginning of more serious responsibilities – job applications and interviews, full-time work, reduced parental reliance, loans to repay, less time to socialize, etc. Preparing may help reduce anxieties and, hopefully, enable students to secure the jobs they want.



### A. Get Organized!

#### *What should I keep as I go through college and after?*

Psychology majors may want to hold onto texts they feel are in an area of study they may pursue later. Your APA writing manual is a keeper. Students are likely to refer to this should they have a writing assignment. Your general psychology text provides a good overview of many issues in psychology. Reviewing this text is step one of preparing for the psychology subject test of the GRE's.

#### *Do I need to keep any course materials?*

- \* University catalog – Students must meet the University and major requirements specified in the catalog of the year in which they enrolled. It is the student's responsibility to know these requirements and inform their advisors should misinformation be provided due to University or departmental changes. Additionally, should a student opt to transfer to another institution, the personnel of that new college may ask to see the catalog or parts of it.
- \* Syllabi – When transferring, it is not unusual for copies of syllabi to be requested. Only by looking at the actual syllabi can registrars or department chairs determine if new students have met prerequisites and such. Most faculty do not store old syllabi. Do not expect to be able to request one year or even semesters after completing a course.
- \* Papers – Wise students will hold onto a few papers that are good examples of their writing ability. Often when applying for jobs and graduate school, a writing sample is requested. It is recommended that majors revise their experimental papers after the semester. Though this revision will not be graded, someday you may be very happy you took the extra time. This is often a paper worked on for two semesters and that has been revised many times.
- \* Notes – If students have taken courses that may relate to their future employment, lecture notes and handouts may come in handy. As an employee, you may be asked to lead a staff meeting. As a graduate student, it is likely that you will be offered a teaching assistantship. As a TA, you will be presenting lectures or conducting recitations (discussions). Though your old notes may not be exactly what you need to do the job, they will provide a start.

### B. Letters of Recommendation

#### *When I apply for jobs, how many references will I need? Who should I ask?*

Typically, three are needed. These should be from people who can evaluate your work. The best references will be professors whose courses you did well in or you worked with. Similarly, administrators or staff who have supervised you are appropriate. For employment-related references, internship/volunteer/work supervisors are good choices.

#### *Who is not a good choice?*

High school teachers, employers you failed to give adequate notice to or for whom you performed poorly, and professors with whom your only contact is a course or two. They cannot really assess your talents. Also, asking someone who has been dissatisfied with your performance is never a good choice!

#### *So, how do I go about getting people to give me recommendations? Should I ask for a letter?*

Before graduation or appropriate resignation from job/internship/volunteer positions, ask people of interest if you can give their names as references. For those who say yes, prepare: referees' names, positions/titles, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses. Place this list at the end of

your resume, on a separate page. Be sure to up-date your listing as you make new contacts.

Most people prefer to tailor their letters to the position the person is seeking. A letter of recommendation for graduate school may be very different from one sent to an employer. The receivers of such letters also prefer it when writers directly address issues important to them – can the candidate meet the demands of the particular position for which he/she has applied?

### ***How do I ask?***

Face-to-face is best. You will get immediate feedback. Writing is fine if personal contact cannot be made. Simply putting someone's name on your listing of references without asking is not appropriate. Notification of a possible request allows the person to consider what they might say/write about you. Catching someone off-guard is never good.

### ***What if I ask someone and he or she says no? I'd be so embarrassed.***

There's no reason to be embarrassed. People say no for any number of reasons, few of which are related to disliking someone. Most commonly, people refuse because they do not feel they know the person well enough to write a fair assessment. Occasionally, people refuse because they feel they won't have the time to write. Especially for those in academics, new course preparations, submitting grant applications, preparing manuscripts or presentations, and other professional activities may make certain time periods very difficult. Occasionally, professors get overwhelmed by the sheer number of requests and may refuse less familiar students. This is especially true for department chairs and popular faculty members.



### ***So, I ask and get a yes. What next?***

Contact that person and let him/her know a reference is needed, the type of position applied for, and with whom. It's also helpful to know if the reference needs to be written or to expect a call. For written references, provide: Your name, address, phone number, courses completed with that instructor and grades, honors/awards, campus-related activities (e.g., clubs, student government, sports teams), and career-related employment, internship or volunteer experiences. With a graduate school application, include a paragraph about why you have chosen the degree program.

### ***It sounds like a student could complete 4 years of college and leave without anyone willing or able to write a solid letter of recommendation. Is that true?***

Absolutely. Students who do not take the time to get to know faculty may not fair well when it comes to getting the best jobs or into graduate programs. Letters are very important. All students need at least 3 people who know them well enough that their true strengths and can be addressed. This requires that students cultivate relationships. Visit during office hours, show interest in classes, have great attendance records, join clubs, attend campus functions, etc. Make yourself visible and distinguish yourself with hard work. Building quality references takes time and effort.

## **C. Preparing a Resume/Vita**

When applying for a position or to graduate school, your resume should be easy to follow, concise, and very professional looking. There are some basic elements to include:

- \* Your name, address, contact information
- \* Education completed – years, institution, degrees, major & minors
- \* Honors/awards
- \* Pertinent employment history – years, job titles, employers, and brief summary of major responsibilities & accomplishments.
- \* Professional memberships
- \* Publications & presentations
- \* Computer skills and other special skills

You should not include your date-of-birth, race, SSN, marital status, and other personal information. Employers are not legally permitted to offer/deny someone a position based on this.

***What skills do psychology majors usually include in their resumes?***

Of particular value in today's job market are oral and written communication abilities, teamwork and leadership experiences, and computer skills. Given the requirements of the psychology major at FSU, students should be able to list the following as skills:

- \* Knowledge of a professional writing style (APA style)
- \* Knowledge of ethical standards for working with participants
- \* Familiarity with the basics of a statistical package (SPSS)
- \* Skill in the use of a word processing package (Word, WordPerfect)
- \* Familiarity with a variety of computer packages
- \* Experience in the oral and poster presentation of research results

Some students may be able to add specific experiences/skills gained from serving as TAs, interns, or from completing directed or independent studies. Skills may also have been developed through part-time and summer employment positions. Again, Career Services has developed resources on spelling out your skills and improving your marketability.

***Are these "skills" really marketable?***

According to a Forbes survey of employers about skills wanted in new college graduates, the top qualities are the ability to work with teams and communication abilities. These are skill commonly practiced in psychology courses, especially research related courses. Other skills of importance are technology use, analytic skills, teamwork, flexibility, proficiency in field of study, leadership skills, and work or internship experiences. Employers advise that students do the following before graduation:

- Gain experience through internships or work-related to their field of study
- Be involved in campus organizations/activities that require team work and leadership skills
- Before applying, research the organizations of interest
- Identify your skills, achievements, and experiences pertinent to the positions of interest
- Start the job search process early
- Use campus career services

For more information, stop by Career Services (McCarthy 507).

Top Ten Things Employers Look for in New College Graduates  
While you may think that choosing the "right" major is key to getting a good job, your long-term professional success will depend far more on acquiring the right skills for a rapidly changing workplace.

1. The ability to work well in teams—especially with people different from yourself
2. An understanding of science and technology and how these subjects are used in real-world settings
3. The ability to write and speak well
4. The ability to think clearly about complex problems
5. The ability to analyze a problem to develop workable solutions
6. An understanding of global context in which work is now done
7. The ability to be creative and innovative in solving problems
8. The ability to apply knowledge and skills in new settings
9. The ability to understand numbers and statistics
10. A strong sense of ethics and integrity

*Source: "How Should Colleges Prepare Students to Succeed in Today's Global Economy?" (Results of a national poll by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 2007).*



***Where should I go to get help with preparing my resume?***

Go to Career Services (McCarthy 507). Plan to spend your first visit learning about their offerings, examining their resources, and getting suggestions. Schedule additional appointments once you have prepared a draft of your resume and as you begin to develop a job search plan. Career Services has extensive resources on preparing resumes. They also have samples. By appointment, the staff is also available for resume reviews and to help students develop portfolios of their work.. Once you have prepared your resume, take it over to the Writing Center (in CASA) for a final check. These on-campus services are **free** and may be used as often as is necessary.

#### D. Finding Job Openings

During senior year, most students begin a job search. Students should anticipate the following:

- a. the need to submit many applications
- b. many unanswered responses and/or rejections
- c. the need to relocate
- d. low/entry level position – your first “real” jobs are likely to involve repetitive tasks, low pay, few benefits, inflexible hours/shifts, and little feedback.
- e. the need for more education or an additional specialty course or certificate.



When faced with employment situations, realize that entry-level positions are short-term if you work hard and show potential. It is likely that within 3-12 months, you will be scheduled to meet with your supervisor for an evaluation. If you have done a good job, make sure your supervisor recognizes your accomplishments. Further, once you are in a company/agency, you will begin to hear about other opportunities and positions as they open. You will learn who the “right” people are if promotions are desired. As you work your way up the ladder, pay and benefits will increase, as will the challenges and intrinsic value of the work you are assigned.

#### *How do I find out about job openings?*

The standard source is to look through the classified sections of area newspapers. However, this may not be enough to find the position best suited to your goals. The Sunday paper typically has the largest number of listings. Classified ads, from a variety of papers, can be viewed on the World Wide Web. For a sample of what you might find using the Web, check out these:

Boston Globe:	<a href="http://www.boston.com/">http://www.boston.com/</a>
Career Path:	<a href="http://www.careerpath.com/">http://www.careerpath.com/</a>
Careers Web:	<a href="http://cwebb.com/">http://cwebb.com/</a>
On-line Resumes:	<a href="http://bridgepath.com/">http://bridgepath.com/</a>
Bulletin Board:	<a href="http://monster.com/">http://monster.com/</a>

Visiting Career Services (CC507) may be the best means to begin a job search. The Career Services office has information on using the Internet for conducting job searches. Students may use a "Career Search" program to examine the types of employers in their areas of interest. Specifically for students interested in working in the helping professions, the Human Services Yellow Pages (of Massachusetts & Rhode Island) and other resource books on human service jobs are available for use on a walk-in basis. Lastly, Career Services personnel are working to develop FASTNET, which will allow FSU students to talk with alumni now in the work force about their positions and experiences.

It is also worthwhile to attend campus job fairs. Though some listings may seem business oriented, companies may have openings in personnel and research offices. Universities also sometimes send representatives in search of research assistants. Two job fairs held at FSU on a yearly basis are:

- The Fall Part-Time Jobs Fair - held in mid-Fall and sponsored by the Financial Aid Office.
- The Job Fair - held each February and sponsored by Career Services.
- Finally, some students have had luck tapping into Web-based personnel listings of area colleges and universities. For psychology majors, positions within offices related to student

services, tutoring, research or lab assistants, and recruitment would be most appropriate. In addition, some colleges and universities now have homepages that include career and job-related information for psychology majors. Try this one: [www.oswego.edu](http://www.oswego.edu)

***Will I have to go for interviews?***

Some companies make decisions based on paper work (resume, letters) and/or phone interviews. Probably the majority want face-to-face interviews. They are interested in seeing if you really have the skills outlined in your application. Interviews also allow employers to get a sense of your "fit." Therefore, it is important that you present yourself well.

- a. Dress for success - neat clothing, well-groomed hair, etc.
- b. Appear confident - smile, look people in the eye, use formal language, sit with your back straight, be prepared with a pen and paper, an extra resume, and work samples.
- c. Show enthusiasm: "Oh, that sounds interesting." "No, I've never done that but...I'd be interested in learning..."
- d. Ask questions - this is a sign of interest.
- e. When asked about strengths - be honest without sounding like a braggart.
- f. When asked about weaknesses - describe weaknesses that are fixable and due to your lack of experience. Do not bring up your major inadequacies here! For example: "I haven't had much experience delegating tasks or working with a team on projects. I'm hoping to gain these skills as I think they are important in today's market."
- g. Go to interviews prepared for some standard questions: What do you see as your major strengths/weaknesses for this position? Where do you see yourself in 5 years? What salary range are you seeking?

***Is there anywhere to have someone evaluate me as a prospective employee?***

Yes. At Career Services, the staff will work with students as they prepare for job interviews. They are able to conduct mock interviews and provide feedback. If scheduled ahead, these mock interviews can be videotaped, allowing you to conduct a self-critique or to see specifically potential strengths or weaknesses. These staff members are particularly familiar with the types of interview questions students entering varying fields of employment may encounter.

***What is an appropriate BA, entry-level salary?***

According to the Career Services' **Alumni Survey**, which is conducted 6 months after graduation, starting salaries for psychology majors employed in the Education/Human Services/Non-profit sector typically range between \$19,000 to \$25,000. Salaries in Business typically range from \$22,000 to \$28,000. The higher end salaries are usually awarded to candidates with experience (through internships, part-time jobs, or volunteer work) or who have special skills. When negotiating a salary, you will have to make a case for yourself. Make your credentials known. Career Services has information on salary negotiations and career counselors are available to assist you.

Additionally, when a job offer is made, consider the benefits package. Medical and retirement plans are valuable assets. However, don't overlook the value (or cost) of the commuting distance, parking, attire requirements, family leave policies, on-site childcare, and promotion possibilities.

**E. Applying to graduate schools**

Often desired positions require Master's degrees or higher. One important fact to keep in mind is that social work and counseling are not the only fields to consider!

***How do I know where to apply?***

Ask yourself is what you want to do 40+ hours a week for the next 5-40 years. What will keep you happy at work and provide you with a satisfying lifestyle? There is no one answer.

***What if I don't know what I want to do?***

Then it's probably not the time to go graduate school. The best advice is probably to work for a year or two. See what's out there. Read about different careers and visit people in such positions. Most people are happy to spend a few minutes talking about the pros and cons of their career.

***Aren't most people around age 22-23 when they get into graduate schools?***

Maybe in the past, but less so today. Many graduate committees look for work-related experience. Graduate faculty prefer working with students who have some direction in their lives. Students who lack direction are likely to do poorly or quit the program. Age is less of a factor in acceptance than are the goals you're working toward and professional experiences you have had.

***How do I select the graduate programs that best fit my goals?***

The basic method is to purchase or borrow a guide to graduate schools. In these guides, each graduate program is described - GRE score and GPA requirements, costs, areas of specialization, and so forth. They are categorized by specialties and region of the country. It is important to look for schools that are accredited. These guides are useful when trying to learn about the diversity of specialties in psychology and related fields. They can also be used to narrow down realistic choices given your grades/scores. Web searches are also helpful.

Once you make some general selections, send for college/university catalogs. If the information within fits your goals, apply. Check Career Services for graduate school guides and/or information on financial aid.



***To how many schools should I apply?***

Generally, 8-12 programs/schools are recommended. Master's-level programs vary in the number of new students enrolled - some places enroll very few graduate students, whereas others may enroll hundreds. In contrast, doctoral programs accept very few new students each year. Some programs admit 1 or 2. Few admit more than 12 in a year. Unlike other degree programs, each doctoral candidate must have a faculty member willing to work with him or her extensively for a 4- to 6-year period. This is very time-consuming and most faculty members cannot adequately serve more than 2-3 students.

***So, applying to graduate school is very competitive, right?***

Yes. Students should expect to receive more rejections than acceptances. It's not as much a matter of lack of qualifications, as it is a matter of "space." Ethically, graduate schools will not accept students they cannot serve well. The best advice is to apply every year. Following a rejection, call and ask to speak to someone on the selection committee. Ask if they can give you any specifics on why your application was rejected and how you might improve your chances of acceptance in the future. Perhaps more work experience is needed, a higher score in a statistics course, an added course in some specialty area, etc. Consider working to remove such deficits and then reapply.

***What's the big deal about enough "space" and working with a graduate student? How is being a graduate student different from being an undergraduate?***

This is an important question. Many students conceive of school as classes, papers, and tests. Graduate school includes this, but there is the added expectation that students will be self-motivated and self-disciplined. Reading requirements generally triple, as do writing expectations and orals. Excuses for late papers or poor work are inappropriate. The demands are even greater for doctoral candidates. It is likely that the student is spending many hours conducting research, teaching undergraduate classes, reading and studying in his/her specialty area, as well as attending courses. It's not unusual for graduate students to study and work 7 days a week, 12-16 hours a day. Faculty members mentoring graduate students must be able to provide research experiences, teaching opportunities, and supervision regularly. Thus, "space" is a major issue.

***I've noticed that some degree descriptions say, "no terminal Master's." What does that mean?***

It means that all students applying must be planning to complete their doctorates, assuming they pass all the requirements. Those desiring a Master's only should apply elsewhere.

***What has been described so far sounds very hit-or-miss. Is there a better strategy for students who have a pretty good idea of what they would like to be doing?***

Yes, but this approach takes lots of work and time. It's not a guarantee of success. Given the effort required, it is a strategy primarily for those seeking doctoral degrees and willing/able to relocate to nearly anywhere.

**Step 1:** Do very well in college and do everything you can to distinguish yourself as a hard working, serious student. Get to know your faculty well. Volunteer on campus. Have a minor that further defines your interests. Learn a statistical package well. Consider taking extra computer, writing, and statistics courses. Get experience as a TA. Submit your research papers to conferences and undergraduate journals. Graduate with at least a GPA of 3.0.

**Step 2:** Prepare for the GRE's. Review math, vocabulary, and psychology basics. Apply for testing early to leave time for retesting. Plan not to take the tests twice. Do well the first time. On the Verbal and Quantitative portions, you will need a total score of 1200 or higher (600 each area).

**Step 3:** Be very specific in your field of choice - applied vs. research, etc. This will be important in directing you to the appropriate sources for conducting your graduate school search.

**Step 4:** Read research journals appropriate to your chosen field, preferably those that have peer-review processes. As you read, be aware of the various topics of research. When one strikes you as most interesting, read all you can. Ask yourself - could I do this type of research for 4-6 years of my life and maybe longer? If your answer is yes, begin keeping note of the authors' names and the universities that employ them.

- \* Look up those schools in the graduate school guides - what are basic requirements, costs, etc.
- \* Do you meet the minimum requirements?

**Step 5:** When you find a match between your interests and the program's requirements, write for a catalog. Also, write to the graduate program specifically and ask for a current listing of faculty and their publications. When the list arrives, read the articles published by the authors you've found most interesting. Write to the authors and ask for reprints if the articles are not available in the library. Know the articles well. Ask faculty to help you with statistics you might not understand.

**Step 6:** Write a letter to the authors you like. Indicate that you have been reading their papers and find their research interesting. Pose intelligent questions or make intelligent comments. You might ask a faculty member to review your letters before mailing. Most researchers are flattered by such letters. It's an excellent way to begin a correspondence - do provide an e-mail address.



**Step 7:** Once you feel certain that this is someone whose work you would enjoy and a personality you could tolerate, write a letter of intent. Specifically, ask if new graduate students will be taken on in the near future. If so, would it be possible for you to forward a copy of your resume and transcript for consideration. At this point, if feelings are mutual, the likely answer will be yes. Send your materials immediately. If the answer is no, move on to your next favorite author. Honesty can hurt, but better now than once you enroll and hate the situation. Sometimes, neither a yes or no will be received. You may be direct to apply. Do so. Often, faculty members are not permitted to accept students without committee approval. However, if a faculty member wants you, you will be accepted into the program. It is also likely that you will receive funding.

**Optional:** Should circumstances permit, visit the graduate school and introduce yourself to the person(s) with whom you have been corresponding. If a conference is scheduled and the author(s) will be presenting, try to attend and hear the talks. Again, go up to the person(s) afterwards and comment on some aspect of the presentation. Basically, you are appropriately showing enthusiasm.

### ***Any cautions with this approach?***

One of the most important reasons for requesting departmental information about recent publications, as well as titles, is to reduce the chance of wasting time. Corresponding with a

graduate student or faculty member is fine, but it will probably not provide the foot-in-the-door for which you're looking. With respect to tenure-track faculty, two unfortunate things can happen to a graduate student that are beyond the student's control. First, your major professor may stop publishing. Some senior level professors no longer conduct research. If they have a recent publication or two, their names may simply be attached to papers produced by their graduate or former graduate students. They might also be reanalyzing data collected long ago, with no intent to start up new projects. As a new graduate student in need of completing a Master's thesis and dissertation, this is bad news. A less senior faculty member or a senior faculty member with a strong recent publication history are far better targets! Second, your major professor may leave. Early in academicians' careers, position changes every 2-3 years are not uncommon. Sometimes you have the option of transferring along with your professor. However, this can be difficult. Loss of your major professor can mean an end to your research or a shift, either of which might delay completion of your degree.

***Other suggestions on how I might increase the odds of graduate school acceptance?***

- \* Apply to 8-12 programs you feel meet your goals and with which you could be comfortable for 4-6 years as a doctoral student or 2-3 at the Master's-level.
- \* Be clear in your goals - Master's or Doctoral. If your ultimate goal is to enter a doctoral program, you do not need default Master's applications. It is wiser to use the next year well - find out what deficits your application has and work to remove these and apply again. Master's degrees do not necessarily "transfer." As a doctoral student, you will complete course requirements and possibly a master's thesis within the department first, then take preliminary exams, and only then be a doctoral candidate.
  - \* Apply to programs not in New England or other densely populated areas of the country.
    - Some of the best public institutions are on the west coast, in the Midwest, or the south. The cost-of-living in the Midwest and the south is also lower than in New England. If concerned about housing, most campuses offer student housing. Apply for such housing until comfortable with the new surroundings.
- \* Apply to a range of programs in terms of competitiveness. If some of your top choices are highly competitive, apply with an understanding that you will likely be rejected. Include some moderately competitive schools or some competitive schools in locations that are not necessarily of high desirability. Do not apply to programs you have no intention of attending!
- \* Hope for acceptances, but don't give up if rejected. Apply again.
- \* Apply early and be sure all application materials are thoroughly completed.
- \* When requesting official transcripts, be sure to use the appropriate forms. Telephone requests will not be honored. Before graduating, stop by the registrar's office and pick up a few transcript request forms and file them.
  - If references are slow to come, send polite reminder notes. It's easy for busy faculty and employers to forget and misplace forms. (Keeping a duplicate reference form from each school is not a bad idea.)
  - When asking others for information (e.g., references), be sure all applicant information is completed and an addressed, stamped envelope is provided.
- \* Prepare an intelligent interest statement. Most graduate applications include one or more questions about your reasons for applying. Your answers allow selection committees to determine a number of things:
  - Your writing ability
  - The maturity of your expectations or reasons for wanting to be a graduate student.
  - Your fit with the program overall.
  - Your fit with a specific faculty mentor/advisor.



***What if I have trouble writing interest statements? Can I get help?***

Ask a faculty member you feel comfortable with if he/she has the time and willingness to read and edit your application materials. You may be revealing very personal information, so you need to ask someone you trust. You might also take your statements to the Writing Center for a

grammatical check. Simply sign-up for an appointment at the front table area of CASA.

***What should I include in such statements?***

That can vary a lot. Often it is desirable to include a concise description of some experience that helped you formulate your career interests. This could be a family or work experience, an article read, or course taken. Indicating that you have completed some self-study in the topic area can also be valuable. Be sure to cite appropriately any references. Addressing strengths and weaknesses, as well as your flexibility in working with professors and fellow students, is also often expected. Lastly, be sure what you say fits with what the program offers. It is wise to read the graduate catalog and any specifics about the program to which you are applying - if there is a mission statement for the department, read it!

Do not babble on about your experiences or become overly dramatic. Keep your writing at a professional level and tone. Also, do not pigeon-hole yourself so narrowly into an interest area that you will be perceived as impossible to fit with a faculty member and inflexible in your goals.

**F. Standardized Tests**

***What standardized tests should I plan to take in case I want to go to graduate school?***

There are several tests accepted by all or some graduate programs in psychology and related fields of study. Information on test dates, specifics, and application materials are available at [Career Services \(CC507\)](#).



- \* **GREs** - The Graduate Record Exam is much like the SATs taken before applying to baccalaureate programs, but harder. It is a 3 hour test with quantitative and verbal sections. There are also experimental sections, but these do not matter in terms of admission requirements. The GRE's are now given year round, with computerized testing arranged by calling 1 800 GRE CALL. Paper-pencil tests are given only 2-3 times per year.
  - Scores required for most graduate programs in psychology are generally in the 80th percentile or higher (both quantitative and verbal).
  - Higher total scores are often required for very competitive schools and divisions, such as clinical psychology.
  - GRE information & scheduling: <http://www.ets.org/gre>
- \* **Subject Tests** - Along with the GREs, students may register for tests in a number of subject areas. Psychology is one of the subject tests available. Major topics in psychology are covered. Courses that will best prepare you for this exam include research methods, statistics, history of psychology, abnormal psychology, and personality.
- \* **Miller Analogies** - This is a one-hour test including 100 analogies that are often very difficult. Information regarding test dates and applications should be sought from Student Services. The score required for entry into psychology graduate programs is 65+.
- \* Other common standardized tests include: **GMATs** (business), **MCATs** (medical), & **LSATs** (law).

***Can I prepare for the tests?***

Yes. Well in advance of testing, study. Six to 12 months of study is recommended. Review math formulas or consider taking algebra and geometry courses, especially if high school was your last coverage of the topics! Study vocabulary by creating flash cards from review lists. Lastly, aside from content, learning to take the test is important. Different sections carry more weight than others. Sometime skipping items results in less penalty than wrong answers. Learning to pace yourself through timed sections is also useful.

***How do I get such practice?***

Depending on available time and money, there are several options:

- \* Least expensive is to plan your electives around specific content courses (e.g., algebra & geometry, specific psychology courses). Keep your textbooks and review them.
- \* Purchase test specific study guides. These books often review basic formulas and issues. Additionally, sample test are included, with answer keys. These sample tests allow you to estimate how well you are likely to do, learn when to skip items, etc. However, you are responsible for timing and grading yourself and "cheating" is easy. It is also difficult to self-diagnose exactly where your strategies have failed.
- \* Purchase computerized versions of the tests. Computer versions allow for practice and they will help diagnose your particular problem areas in terms of strategies and content.
  - The Career Services (CC412) office has computerized versions of the GREs available. Call to reserve your times!
- \* Enroll in test-specific courses. Via practice and lectures you will become well informed on issues in standardized testing and your strengths and weaknesses. Courses range in length and cost. Generally, this is the most expensive means of preparation.
  - There are many test preparation sites in the area. Information may be obtained at the Career Services (CC412). Fees vary widely. See the appendices of this handbook for a list of companies.

***Any other advice on how to boost my scores?***

The night before the test, relax, eat a good meal, and get to bed early. You should get 8 hours of sleep and wake early to a light, healthy meal. Avoid alcohol and drugs of any kind (unless prescribed by a physician). Pack a nutritious snack (and lunch if staying for the afternoon subject test). Bring pencils and your registration form only. No other materials will be permitted in the test room. Arrive at the test site well before the start of the test. Rushing will only increase anxiety. Listen to instructions carefully. Failure to start and stop when announced by the test proctors may result in dismissal. Your money will not be refunded. Do not even consider cheating!

Consider ***professional memberships***:

- APA: <http://www.apa.org/membership/student/index.aspx>
- NEAP: <http://www.planetreg.com/E41451316254112>
- Psi Chi – FSU: <http://www.framingham.edu/psychology-and-philosophy/extra-curricular-activities/psi-chi.html>
- Psi Chi – National: <http://www.psichi.org/>

## **A Student's Recommendations for Exploring Graduate Programs**

**Step 1 - Determine the type of psychology degree desired.** Decide first if you are interested in a Master's, Ph.D., or Psy.D. The next decision-making step is to determine the area of psychology of most interest. Some of the most common subdivisions of psychology are developmental, clinical, counseling, industrial-organizational, psychobiology, quantitative, and social. Within these subdivisions, additional decisions need to be made. For instance, are you hoping to work with children or adults? Is your interest primarily research-oriented or applied? These decisions should reflect your career plan.

**Step 2 - Narrow down the area of the country or world where you would not mind living for 2 to 7 years.** Many texts organize information on graduate school offering by state. Keep in mind costs of living. The South and Midwest tend to have excellent schools and the cost of living (e.g., rent, food, utilities) is reasonable. The Northeast and West Coast also have excellent schools, but the cost of living may make life as a student more difficult. Consider what you can afford and how deeply in debt you might be when finished. Keep in mind that graduate school is typically 2 years for a Masters and 5-7 years for a Ph.D.

**Step 3 - Go to Career Services.** The resources are very helpful and easy to use. Programs are listed in terms of degrees and states (thus, the value of Steps 1 & 2). The Career Service staff are also good resources.

They have helped many students conduct searches and have helpful advice on certain schools. Take a big notebook and take down information such as: the school and department addresses, application contacts, and degrees offered. More specific information that may be of interest includes: specific faculty research areas, application deadlines, test scores required (e.g., GREs, Millers) and minimum or average scores of enrolled students, minimum and average GPAs, and the number of students who apply and are accepted yearly. It is preferable to get recent publications sponsored by APA.

**Step 4 - Utilize the Internet.** As you complete broad searches of psychology graduate schools using a search engine, keep track of specific websites. It is very easy to lose a good site and not be able to get back to it when searching again. One of the best sites I found was [www.arches.uga.edu/~jfrick/gradsite.htm](http://www.arches.uga.edu/~jfrick/gradsite.htm). It provides internet site links for graduate schools in psychology. Many school also have their own web pages that are updated regularly and give a great deal of information, even course schedules.

**Step 5 - Read some graduate school rankings.** These are not perfect and are all different. The information allows you some means of comparing the quality of the schools you may be considering.

**Step 6 - Write to some of the schools you've selected.** Ask for information about their specific degree program. Also ask for information on faculty research and research-related requirements. Almost every school I wrote to responded back within a couple of weeks.

**Step 7 - Research graduate school tests.** Find out what tests are required. GREs are commonly required and many graduate programs in psychology want scores from the General and Subject tests. Research the tests and study over a long period of time. Cramming is not recommended. For the General GRE, Career Services has a program that allows you to take a practice exam on the computer and analyze your strengths and weaknesses. There are also courses you can pay for that teach you how to take the test. There are books and computer programs available for studying too. For the Subject test in psychology, there are lots of books that include practice tests and helpful reviews. Rereading your General Psychology text might help too. Some professors will give or loan you old texts - check in the department before buying a new book!

Be sure to note the test dates and plan ahead. The General test is offered every month on computer, but the Subject tests are only offered a few times per year. Be sure you give yourself enough time to take the required tests and have scores forwarded to your selected schools before application deadlines. You may also want to plan far enough ahead so that there is time to retake the tests if you would like to.

**Step 8 - Keep track of everything.** If you ruled out a school, keep a note of it. This will stop you from researching it again! Keep a list of schools written to and check-off those that have responded. Save all catalogs and after a few weeks, rewrite to those still missing from your list. When finished all your searching and deciding, bring the extra catalogs to the library or Career Services. They may want them.

**Step 9 - Letters & your statement.** After deciding on one or more school to which you will apply, the next tasks are to request letters of recommendations and write personal statements for the applications. Hopefully, you have become familiar with 2-3 faculty members. It's important that they can write not only about the grades you've received in their courses, but also about qualities that make you a good candidate for a graduate program. As you complete your 4 years at FSU, try to get involved in academic clubs, the student government, leadership activities, teaching opportunities, independent studies, and internships. All of these serve as evidence of your abilities and interests.

In writing a personal statement, follow the specific directions. But, don't be so specific in your interests that you seem narrow-minded. Don't dwell too much on personal experiences. Just give brief overviews of experiences that have affected you and directed your career focus. Most of all, check your organization and grammar. Pass the statement to a professor you feel comfortable with revealing personal information for comments. Also, go to CASA for a grammar check!