

# Appendix TT: Frequently Asked Questions

## PsyD Program

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Choosing a Program and License(s) to Pursue

**1. Is the PsyD APA accredited?**

The PsyD program received full accreditation from the American Psychological Association in August 2023. We received accreditation for 10 years, and our next self-study will be due in 2033.

**2. Where can I find the instructions and materials needed to apply to the program?**

Application instructions and materials are linked on the PsyD program website (<https://www.uhcl.edu/academics/degrees/health-service-psychology-psyd>).

**3. When can I apply?**

The admissions process happens once a year, with a deadline of December 15<sup>th</sup>.

**4. What are my chances of being admitted?**

Since the inception of the program, admissions have become increasingly competitive. Last year, we admitted about 15% of applicants, after interviewing approximately 40% of those who apply. Due to program capacity limitations, we are only able to accept those who present the very strongest applications and interviews, meaning that some qualified applicants will not be accepted into the program. With regard to our accepted students, the average GRE was 306 and an average GPA was 3.89.

For cohorts, we seek to accept up to 10 students.

**5. What are characteristics of students who are admitted and succeed in the program?**

It is expected that admitted students will have a strong GPA and a combined Graduate Record Exam (GRE) score around or above the average of 300. Admitted students typically have very strong letters of recommendation, usually from at least one or more professors or supervisors in a school and/or mental health-relevant setting. Also, admitted students often have research experience, with resulting products (posters, papers, chapters).

Further, some experience volunteering or working in a setting relevant to applied mental health services (e.g., crisis line, domestic violence shelter, psychotherapy clinical trial) is helpful. Overall, they tend to have a record that demonstrates productivity, reliability,

and a passion for the field. Also, successful students are compassionate, intellectually curious, and have strong interpersonal skills.

**6. What can one do to improve chances of being admitted?**

The admissions committee evaluates all application materials, in particular, the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), prior academic records, letters of recommendations, and products from and experiences with research, as well as prior experiences in settings relevant to clinical work. Thus, if an applicant's GPA or GRE is lower than those indicated above (typical characteristics of students who are accepted), then it is important that other parts of their application indicate an extraordinary strength in some other area of performance (e.g., research experience, prior academic performance, clinical experience, and letters of recommendation).

We encourage individuals to meet with their mentors (those they hope to provide letters of recommendation) to discuss ways to strengthen their applications.

**7. Can I meet with you about my application?**

The program receives a large number of applications and is not designed to meet with individuals regarding specifics about their application. Thus, we are unable to provide individualized information either before or after the application process. It is impossible for us to admit every candidate likely to be a successful graduate student. We offer admission to those whose applications are comparatively strongest during each admission period, and some students with outstanding potential may not be offered admissions. Further, we offer admissions to those that match well with the program and faculty, especially those faculty the student wants to work with.

**8. If I am not admitted the first time, should I re-apply?**

We recommend that applicants who are not offered admission during a given admissions period consider the competitiveness of their application by comparing their performance to the qualifications outlined by the program. Applicants with scores substantially lower than those typically admitted are unlikely to gain admission if they re-apply unless circumstances have changed in the interim (e.g., enrolling and excelling in a Master's/Specialist level graduate program; subsequently scoring higher on the GRE). We would encourage applicants to discuss their application and their approach to interviewing with a trusted mentor (for example, one of those asked to write a letter of recommendation). Sometimes applicants can improve their applications by significantly increasing relevant experiences (e.g., volunteer work in a clinical setting) or by demonstrating excellence in some other area (e.g., research

productivity, exceptional performance in a course taught by clinical psychology faculty) prior to re-applying.

### **9. How are students evaluated for admission into the program?**

With regard to admissions, the program's policy is to review every applicant that applies to the program. We do not have required standards for admissions, instead we have recommended standards. All applicants are reviewed by two to three faculty members, and each faculty members scores the applicant on their application. The mean of those scores are then used to determine who will be invited for an interview. Finally, those with the highest score will be asked to come to campus for an interview. During the interview, there are set interview questions for both the group interview and the individual interview. At the end of interviews, each faculty member scores each applicant on their interview. Mean interview ratings are one of the metrics used to offer acceptance into the program. Another metrics is a student's fit with their desired mentor.

It should be noted that students are taken into a lab when they are admitted. Thus, it is important to develop an application based on their fit into the mission of the program and their fit with 1-2 specific mentors.

## **Employment and Financial Assistance during Program**

### **1. What financial aid, scholarships, assistantships, and stipends (if any) are available for the PsyD program?**

The program offers an assistantship of approximately \$17000 per year, which will require the student to work as a teaching assistant or research assistant. This assistantship does not include a tuition waiver. Outside of the assistantship, the university offers some – but typically modest—opportunities for financial aid (see <https://www.uhcl.edu/eservices/students-guides/financial-aid/>).

### **2. Are students able to work while enrolled in the program?**

Given the assistantship responsibilities and the demands of the program, students typically are not allowed to work outside of the program. On a rare occasion, students can petition the DCT (Director of Clinical Training) to get permission to work outside the program, but the student will only be approved if this work does not interfere with their commitment to the program. It should also be noted that any outside work (if approved) will need to be outside of typical business hours (8 am-5 pm), when most program courses are offered. It is currently not possible to navigate the program without completing courses and practica during typical business hours.

### **3. Is it possible to be a part-time student in the program?**

This is a full-time program. All students are expected to be full-time students, including taking 9-12 hours each long-semester and working 20 hours per week for their assistantship. It should also be noted almost all classes are in-person, not via Zoom and not online. Further, almost all classes are held during the day.

## Progressing through the Program Curriculum

### **1. How does student advising and mentoring work?**

All students are accepted under one research supervisor, who will be their academic advisor and mentor. Thus, when students apply they will be asked to list those faculty members who they would like to work under. Therefore, students should address how their interests align with each faculty member, who may have expertise in areas of research that overlap with their interests.

### **2. May I complete program coursework online or at night?**

No, the program's training experience is provided via in-class lectures, discussion, and learning of applied clinical skills. There are a very few classes that are offered online, and there are very few classes that are offered in the evenings.

### **3. Does the program require a thesis?**

Students must complete a thesis as part of program requirements. If, prior to enrollment in the program, a student has completed a Master's thesis, a substantial research project, or contributed substantially to an empirically-based published article (peer-reviewed), they can apply for a waiver of the HSP Thesis requirement.

### **4. Does the program require a dissertation?**

Yes, the program requires a dissertation. Typically, the dissertation is proposed by the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the program (or 3<sup>rd</sup> year for students with substantial waived graduate coursework, such as those with a previously completed Master's or Specialist degree), with the student working most of that year on the completion of the dissertation.

### **5. Does the program require a qualifying exam?**

Yes, the program requires a qualifying exam. More information can be found in the PsyD Student Handbook regarding the qualifying exam.

## Training Experiences while Completing the PsyD Program.

### **1. What kinds of external practica (internships) are available and how are they arranged?**

After completing a two-semester internal practicum at the UHCL Psychological Services Clinic, students complete a minimum four-semester of external practica. Our program has established and maintains positive relationships with a broad array of practicum sites in the greater Houston area which provide students with many options for extending their clinical training. Sites include traditional outpatient mental health clinics, school districts, medical settings, and correctional settings.

**2. Are there opportunities for specialization in particular areas (e.g., substance abuse, OCD, eating disorders)?**

Our program provides generalist clinical training. Students wanting to set a foundation for specialization do so through research and clinical experiences. Further, it should be noted that if you are wanting specialized training (especially in neuropsychology) that you should consider not applying to our program and to look for programs that align with your specialization.