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## The MSU Undergraduate Program in Psychology

### Introduction

We would like to welcome you to the Department of Psychology at Mississippi State University. A variety of students are attracted to the field of psychology. Some major in psychology because they want to be clinical therapists—helping people with problems to find solutions. Others want to do research—studying people or animals in order to gain more information about behavior.

Many students may have chosen psychology without knowing very much about the nature of the field. This is not unusual since most high schools do not offer a psychology course. Therefore, the first opportunity for many students to learn about psychology occurs in an introductory course taken during their freshman or sophomore year in college. One purpose of this guidebook is to let you find out as much about psychology as possible before you fully commit yourself to this major. Also, this guidebook has been designed to be a guide to general and specific information about the MSU Psychology program and to acquaint you with the department and its staff. This guidebook is not meant to replace the current university catalog, the ultimate authority on graduation requirements. Please familiarize yourself with the material contained in the catalog.

### What is Psychology?

Psychology has been defined as the science of behavior and mental events. All psychologists study behavior; however, the type of behavior and the purpose for studying that behavior varies from psychologist to psychologist, depending on the area of interest. The following is only a partial list of areas in the field of psychology:

#### 1. Clinical Psychology

Clinical psychologists are skilled in the evaluation and treatment of people experiencing problems with stress or emotions. Clinical psychologists also may carry out research to test the effectiveness of different treatments for psychological disorders. The clinical psychologists you will meet in the Mississippi State University Psychology Department teach, do research, and engage in consultation and treatment.

#### 2. Social Psychology

Social psychologists are primarily researchers who study the influence that groups or other individuals have on the individual or group being studied.

#### 3. Industrial Psychology

Industrial psychologists use scientific techniques to study how work is performed and then use the knowledge gained to make suggestions designed to improve job satisfaction, productivity, and employee morale.

#### 4. Forensic Psychology

Forensic psychologists apply the science and profession of psychology to problems and issues relating to law, law enforcement, and the judicial system.

#### 5. Developmental Psychology

Developmental psychologists are interested in behavior changes as a result of aging. Development is a continuous process from birth to death, and its study results in psychologists who specialize in child psychology, adolescent psychology, gerontology (the study of aging and the elderly), and life-span development.

#### 6. Cognitive Psychology

Cognitive psychologists are involved with such things as language, memory, and reasoning. Increasingly, cognitive psychologists also are interested in modeling mental activities with computers.

#### 7. Health Psychology

Health psychologists use psychology in research and practice to promote health, improve treatment, and prevent illness.

## The Psychology Department at Mississippi State

### Faculty

Our faculty have a wide variety of specialties, skills, and interests. This means that most students can find someone with whom they will feel comfortable engaging in intensive study. There is an informal atmosphere in the department that helps students realize that faculty members are always available to talk about areas of mutual interest and concern.

**Within the department, the faculty believe that our primary responsibility to you is to provide exposure to:**

- The basic theories and empirical findings in various content areas of psychology (e.g., biological psychology, social psychology, learning, abnormal psychology, behavior modification, industrial psychology, etc.).
- Various research methods and statistics as they apply to psychology.
- Practicing professionals in various areas and specialties within psychology.

**Stephen Klein** – Professor and Head of the Psychology Department. Ph.D., Psychobiology, Rutgers University, 1971. M.S., Psychobiology, Rutgers University, 1969. B.A., Psychology, Virginia Tech University, 1968. Interests: biological bases of learning and memory. Courses: Psychology of Learning, Biological Psychology. Joined Department: 1990.

**Carolyn Adams-Price** – Associate Professor. Ph.D., Developmental Psychology, West Virginia University, 1988. M.A., Social/Developmental Psychology, Brandeis University, 1983. B.A., Honors in Psychology, University of California Santa Cruz, 1979. Interests: applied cognitive aging. Courses: Psychology of Aging, Gender Differences, Memory, Developmental Psychology. Joined Department: 1990.

**Kevin Armstrong** – Associate Professor, Graduate Coordinator, and Assistant Department Head. Ph.D., Clinical Psychology, Illinois Institute of Technology, 1991. B.A., Psychology, Carleton College, 1982. Interests: assessment and treatment issues in clinical psychology. Courses: Abnormal Psychology, Behavior Modification, Introduction to Clinical Psychology, Psychopathology. Joined Department: 1997.

**Gary Bradshaw** – Professor. Ph.D., Psychology, Carnegie-Mellon University, 1984. M.A., Experimental Psychology, University of Missouri, 1979. B.A., Psychology, University of Missouri, 1974. Interests: scientific discovery and invention, models of intelligence and thought, decision making. Courses: Experimental Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, Applied Cognitive Research Seminar. Joined Department: 1999.

**Tom Carskadon** – Professor, Undergraduate Coordinator, and Editor, *Journal of Psychological Type*. Ph.D., Clinical Psychology, University of Colorado, 1973. M.A., Clinical Psychology, University of Colorado, 1971. B.A., Psychology, Phi Beta Kappa, Oberlin College, 1968. Interests: psychological type and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the first-year experience (FYE) and teaching new college students, teaching of psychology, anomalous psychology and scientific skepticism, automotive psychology. Courses: General Psychology, Honors General Psychology, Theories of Personality. Joined Department: 1973.

**Sara Dehart-Young** – Lecturer and Freshman-Sophomore Advisor. M.S., Art Therapy, East Virginia Medical School, 1993. B.S., Psychology, Guilford College, 1989. Interests: art therapy, development in children and adolescents. Courses: General Psychology, Careers in Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Abnormal Psychology. Joined Department: 1998.

**Stephanie Doane** – Professor and Founder of the Institute for Neurocognitive Science and Technology (INST). Ph.D., Cognitive Psychology, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1986. M.S., Experimental Psychology, Villanova University, 1983. B.A., Experimental Psychology, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1979. Interests: strategic skill acquisition, expertise, computational models of cognition. Courses: Cognitive Psychology, Human-Computer Interaction, Issues and Methods in Cognitive Psychology, Computational Models of Expertise. Joined Department: 1999.

**Philip Drumheller** – Lecturer. Ph.D., Educational Psychology, University of Mississippi, 1988. M.S., Counseling and Human Development, Troy State University, 1978. B.A., Psychology, University of Alabama, 1973. Interests: stress management, training of psychologists and counselors. Courses: Abnormal Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Social Psychology. Joined Department: 2002.

**Fred Drummond** – Lecturer. Ph.D., Counseling Psychology, Texas A & M University, 1981. M.Ed., Rehabilitation Counseling, Mississippi State University, 1973. B.A., Psychology, Mississippi State University, 1971. Interests: psychopathology and child psychopathology, child development, clinical behavior therapy, theories of personality. Courses: General Psychology, Developmental Psychology. Joined Department: 2003.

**Deborah Eakin** – Assistant Professor. Ph.D., Cognitive Psychology, University of Kansas, 2003. M.A., Cognitive Psychology, University of Kansas, 2000. B.A., Psychology, Summa Cum Laude, Columbus State University, 1996. Interests: cognitive neuroscience, memory, metamemory, cognitive aging. Courses: Cognitive Psychology, Memory, Psychological Research. Joined Department: 2005.

**Virginia Fee** – Associate Professor. Ph.D., Child Clinical Psychology, Louisiana State University, 1992. M.S., Clinical Psychology, Louisiana State University, 1988. B.A., Psychology, Hamline University, 1985. Interests: childhood psychopathology. Courses: Child Clinical Psychology, Intelligence Testing, Behavior Therapy, Introduction to Professional Practicum. Joined Department: 1992.

**Marty Giesen** – Professor and Senior Research Scientist, Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision. Ph.D., Experimental Social Psychology, Kent State University, 1973. M.A., Psychology, Kent State University, 1972. B.A., Mathematics and Psychology, University of Texas, 1969. Interests: applied social psychology, outcomes in national health and rehabilitation service delivery systems, minorities in rehabilitation, statistics and psychometrics. Courses: Introductory Psychological Statistics, Quantitative Techniques in Psychology Using Computers, Quantitative Methods in Psychology. Joined Department: 1973.

**Kristine Jacquin** – Associate Professor. Ph.D., Clinical Psychology, University of Texas, 1997. M.A., Clinical Psychology, University of Texas, 1993. B.A., Psychology, Northwestern University, 1991. Interests: youth violence, neuropsychology, forensic psychology. Courses: Abnormal Psychology, Psychopharmacology, Psychology and Law, Forensic Psychology. Joined Department: 2000.

**Nancy McCarley** – Associate Professor and Director of the Shackouls Honors College. Ph.D., Educational Psychology, Mississippi State University, 1993. M.S., Clinical Psychology, Mississippi State University, 1986. B.A., Psychology, Summa Cum Laude, Mississippi State University, 1984. Interests: psychological type, the repressive coping style. Courses: General Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Human Sexual Behavior. Joined Department: 1997.

**David McMillen** – Professor (retired; part-time active). Ph.D., Social Psychology, University of Texas, 1968. B.A., Psychology, University of Memphis, 1963. Interests: student retention and academic improvement for first-year students, highway safety issues including alcohol and seat belt use. Joined Department: 1968.

**Cate Scanes** – Lecturer. M.S., Counseling Psychology, Iowa State University, 2003. B.A., Accounting, Iowa State University, 1993. Interests: psychopathology, counseling. Courses: Abnormal Psychology, Developmental Psychology, General Psychology. Joined Department: 2005.

**Colleen Sinclair** – Assistant Professor. Ph.D., Social Psychology, University of Minnesota, 2004. B.A., Psychology, Women's Studies, English, University of Colorado, 1996. Interests: relationships, psychology and law, aggression. Courses: Social Psychology, Experimental Psychology, Psychology and Law. Joined Department: 2005.

**Charles Spurrison** – Professor and Director of Clinical Training. Ph.D., Clinical Psychology, University of Southern Mississippi, 1987. M.A., Clinical Psychology, University of Southern Mississippi, 1984. B.A., Psychology, Summa Cum Laude, North Texas State University, 1981. Interests: personality assessment, empirically validated inferences, Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), treatment of behavioral disorders and other psychopathology in persons with mental retardation. Courses: Psychology of Abnormal Behavior, Internship in Psychology, Systems of Psychotherapy, Personality Appraisal, Professional Practicum. Joined Department: 1989.

**Mike Thorne** – Professor Emeritus (part-time active). Ph.D., Physiological Psychology, Louisiana State University, 1969. M.A., Comparative Psychology, Louisiana State University, 1967. B.A., Sociology, Louisiana State University, 1964. Interests: history of psychology, teaching introductory-level statistics. Courses: Introductory Psychological Statistics, History of Psychology, Physiological Psychology. Joined Department: 1970.

**Carrick Williams** – Assistant Professor. Ph.D., Psychology, Michigan State University, 2003. M.A., Psychology, Michigan State University, 1997. B.A., Psychology, Political Science, Phi Beta Kappa, Kansas State University, 1995. Interests: visual search and eye movements, scene and face processing, eye movements and reading, inhibition in younger and older adults, object memory from intentional and incidental viewing. Courses: Sensation and Perception, Psychology of Aging, Psychological Statistics. Joined Department: 2005.

## Degree Programs in Psychology

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Mississippi State University offers two undergraduate degree programs in psychology, a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree and a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree. It is generally agreed that a person with a bachelor's degree in psychology is not a psychologist. He or she is, rather, the possessor of a liberal arts education with a concentration in psychology. Anyone planning a career as a professional psychologist must complete a graduate program. Either the B.A. or the B.S. will prepare you either for graduate school or for immediate employment. Students must choose which set of requirements (B.A. or B.S.) they would prefer to meet. If you intend to go to graduate school immediately after completing your undergraduate degree, you will probably find either the B.S. or B.A. program suitable. The B.A. degree provides students with a comprehensive exposure to the major core areas in psychology within a liberal arts education. The B.S. program replaces four courses in the humanities and three courses in the social sciences with a six-course theme requirement, which may involve additional courses in psychology. The theme can be a minor in any other department, or an established concentration like gerontology, artificial intelligence, or women's studies. Many students construct a theme around their individual interests, such as child clinical psychology, Christian counseling, forensic psychology, etc. All themes must be approved in advance by the student's advisor and the Department Head.

### **A bachelor's degree in psychology prepares graduates to pursue:**

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1. Master's or doctoral study in psychology.
2. Graduate school in related areas such as Guidance, Counseling, Educational Psychology, Rehabilitation, Social Work, Physical Therapy, Criminology, Law, Medicine, Management, Marketing, etc.
3. Employment in private business or government (e.g., working with persons with mental illnesses or with developmental disabilities, social work, personnel work, quality control, management training, marketing research, sales, etc.).

**Psychology Majors must earn a "C" or better in all Psychology courses.**

### **Requirements for a B.A. Degree in Psychology**

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The full requirements of the B.A. degree in Psychology are found in the official MSU course catalog. On the following pages you will see a simplified summary that will fit the needs of most students.

### **Requirements for a B.S. Degree in Psychology**

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The faculty in psychology feel that a B.S. program should reflect the liberal arts mission of the department. To accomplish this goal, students in the B.S. program complete a six-course theme. The theme approach allows students to create a plan of study to complement their interests and to encourage them to see the connections between courses.

Students may elect to use a pre-existing minor or concentration as a theme, as long as they adequately describe how the courses in the minor or concentration fit together into a theme that relates to psychology. Students may elect to deviate from existing minors or concentrations and create their own themes with the consent of their advisors. "Creating one's own theme" will not be easy and will require planning in advance, but it is a very satisfying option for many of our students.

In either case, a student's theme must be approved by his or her advisor and by the Department Head prior to admission into the B.S. program. A student interested in pursuing the B.S. degree also must fulfill various course requirements in addition to the theme. In addition to the theme requirement, the differences between the B.S. and the B. A. degree programs in psychology are: the humanities requirement is 6 rather than 18 credit hours, the social science requirement is 3 instead of 12 credit hours (outside Psychology), the foreign language requirement is 2 semesters instead of 3, and the total credit hours required for graduation are 124 instead of 120.

The full requirements of the B.S. degree in Psychology are found in the official MSU course catalog. On the following pages you will see a simplified summary that will fit the needs of most students.

## Examples of Themes for B.S. Degrees in Psychology

### A. A theme that is a concentration: Gerontology

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Part of Psychology major:  
 PSY 3803 – Developmental Psychology  
 PSY 4993 – Psychology of Aging

Theme-related electives:  
 HS 4403 – Introduction to Gerontology  
 HS 3673 – Environments for Special Needs  
 ABE 4513 – Dynamics of Aging  
 SW 4623 – Social Work with the Aged  
 COE 4713 – Issues in Aging  
 SO 4413 – Aging and Retirement in American Society

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***Brief explanation of Gerontology theme:*** These courses examine biological, sociological, and psychological aspects of older persons, greatly expanding what is learned in the Psychology of Aging. The courses also introduce students to the multidisciplinary nature of gerontology, stressing the unique problems and attributes of the elderly.

### B. A theme that is a certificate: Criminal Justice/Corrections

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Part of Psychology major:  
 PSY 3213 – Psychology of Abnormal Behavior  
 PSY 4223 – Drug Use and Abuse

Theme-related electives:  
 COR 3103 – The Criminal Justice System  
 SO 2203 – Racial and Cultural Minorities  
 SO 3603 – Criminology  
 SO 4233 – Juvenile Delinquency  
 SO 4513 – Correctional Systems  
 COR 3310 – Field Work  
 COR 3320 – Field Work

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***Brief explanation of the Criminal Justice/Corrections theme:*** The courses involve the study of crime, crime control, and the administration of justice, including the study of the structure, functions, and decision processes of all administering components within the system. Criminal Justice and Corrections also are inherently linked to the broader study of crime, delinquency, deviant behavior, and social pathology.

### C. A self-defined (individualized) theme: Child Clinical Psychology

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Part of Psychology major:  
 PSY 3213 – Abnormal Psychology  
 PSY 3803 – Developmental Psychology  
 PSY 3343 – Psychology of Learning  
 PSY 4223 – Drug Use and Abuse

Theme-related electives:  
 PSY 3363 – Behavior Modification  
 PSY 3413 – Human Sexual Behavior  
 PSY 3503 – Health Psychology  
 PSY 4343 – Child Clinical Psychology  
 PSY 4353 – Psychology and Law  
 SO 1203 – Marriage and Family

**These are only EXAMPLES of themes.  
 Many, many more can be created to fit the student's individual goals and interests.**

## Premedical Psychology

Premedical Psychology is an increasingly popular option. Students can major in Psychology while fulfilling all requirements for admission to medical school. The Premedical Psychology program is ideal for students who want to become psychiatrists. After obtaining a thorough grounding in Psychology for your undergraduate major, you go through four years of medical school, followed by a one-year general medical internship, and a three-year residency in psychiatry. Psychologists cannot prescribe psychotropic medications (drugs) to treat psychological disorders, but psychiatrists are trained and able to do so.

The Premedical Psychology degree is awarded through a special form of the B.S. program. The theme consists of science courses in excess of the core curriculum requirements. Premedical Psychology students should consult both a Psychology major advisor and a premedical advisor.

Premedical Psychology students must complete the following courses:

CH 1213 Chemistry I (with lab)	BCH 3613 Elementary Biochemistry
CH 1223 Chemistry II (with lab)	MA 1313 College Algebra
CH 4513 Organic Chemistry I (with lab)	MA 1323 Trigonometry
CH 4523 Organic Chemistry II (with lab)	
PH 1113 General Physics I (with lab)	PSY 1013 General Psychology
PH 1123 General Physics II (with lab)	PSY 1021 Careers in Psychology
PH 1133 General Physics III (with lab)	PSY 3103 Psychological Statistics
	PSY 3314 Experimental Psychology
BIO 1504 Principles of Zoology (with lab)	PSY 4403 Biological Psychology
BIO 2103 Cell Biology	
BIO 3504 Comparative Anatomy (with lab)	
BIO 4413 Immunology	
BIO 4504 Comparative Vertebrate Embryology (with lab)	
BIO 4514 Animal Physiology (with lab)	

Recommended Psychology course options:

PSY 3213 Abnormal Psychology  
 PSY 3623 Social Psychology  
 PSY 3803 Developmental Psychology  
 PSY 3343 Psychology of Learning  
 PSY 4223 Drug Use and Abuse  
 PSY 4353 Psychology and Law  
 PSY 3363 Behavior Modification  
 PSY 3413 Human Sexual Behavior  
 PSY 3503 Health Psychology  
 PSY 4983 Psychology of Aging

### Increasing the Attractiveness of Your Degree

There are several options available for a student with a liberal arts education with an emphasis on psychology. Once you have chosen an area of interest, you can begin to prepare for a career through the planned use of electives. If graduate work in psychology is the option chosen, a broad base of psychology courses is recommended, and you should include as many different areas as possible, e.g., Social, Personality, History, Biological, Developmental, Experimental, Learning, etc. If you choose to pursue graduate work in a psychology-related field, it is a good idea for you to take as many courses as possible in that related field.

For some of you, a double major approach may be helpful; that is, you will meet the degree requirements for both Psychology and a related area. Some fields that the psychology major readily can enter include: philosophy, social work, sociology, management, criminology, communication, and computer science. The double major has the advantage of leaving your options open at the same time that it increases the attractiveness of your degree to a potential employer. For instance, if you have a double major in psychology and management (depending on your GPA and test scores) you should be equally qualified for work in either area. In short, you may be better able to find a job with both degrees than with one in psychology alone.

Several departments offer courses complementary to the psychology degree. Recommended options to consider include: Communication, Computer Science, Counselor Education, Educational Psychology, Management, Marketing, Philosophy, Social Work, Sociology, Special Education, Statistics, and Zoology.

When choosing electives, you should consult your advisor and the department offering the course in which you are interested to determine prerequisites. This allows you to get a better understanding of the specific nature of the course before registering.

When choosing a future option, it is important to remember that although some jobs are available to persons with a bachelor's degree in psychology, pay is often low and advancement limited. If you are planning to find employment immediately after graduation, you should be aware that persons with an undergraduate major in psychology often are able to find employment in occupations in which psychology is relevant (sales, personnel, etc.). In fact, in this area of the country, people with a liberal arts education have been quite successful in obtaining good jobs both in private business and in governmental agencies. As mentioned earlier, the judicious choice of electives can help to make your degree more attractive to potential employers.

Anyone intending to have a professional career in psychology should plan to do graduate work. However, it is becoming more difficult to gain admission to psychology graduate programs because of the number of qualified applicants. Maintaining a high GPA (college grade point average) is essential.

## Opportunities to Broaden Your Horizons

### Psi Chi

Psi Chi is the national honor society in psychology. Mississippi State has had a Psi Chi chapter for many years. Admission to Psi Chi is based on high academic achievement, and you will be invited to join if you are qualified. Students in Psi Chi are involved in professional activities related to psychology and are committed to contributing to their discipline in a significant way.

## Getting Into Graduate School

You should begin the process of applying to graduate programs by the middle of your junior year. The first step is to check for dates when the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) will be offered over the next year. There are two parts to the GRE: the aptitude (general academic skills) test, which almost all graduate programs require, and the advanced test, which is required by many programs. It is generally considered advisable to take the general test first and to take the advanced test on a subsequent testing date after you have completed more of your psychology courses.

Your GRE scores are important determinants of whether or not you will be admitted to graduate school, so you should prepare carefully for the test. Workbooks and computer-based tutorials on how to prepare for such examinations are available in university bookstores and elsewhere. Your second step is to become familiar with *Graduate Studies in Psychology*, published by the American Psychological Association. This book provides a wealth of information about each of the universities in the U.S. that offer graduate programs in psychology. This information includes average GRE scores accepted, minimum GRE scores and GPA required, fees, types of programs available, and whether financial aid is available for incoming graduate students. There is a copy of this book in the Psychology Department office. By comparing your own scores and grades to the GRE scores and GPAs any particular program requires and typically accepts, you can get some idea whether it might be worthwhile for you to apply to that program.

In order to make your application for graduate school as attractive as possible to admission screening committees, you should begin planning well in advance. Obviously good grades are important, and generally speaking, the better your grades, the better your chances of being admitted to graduate training. One of the best things you can do is get involved in one or more faculty members' research programs. Talk to faculty with interests like yours. Many research opportunities are available. Another factor that may be of value is experience in applied settings. Paid employment or volunteer activity in a mental health setting, mental retardation training facility, laboratory, etc., will usually be seen as evidence that you have more than just book knowledge of the field and are genuinely interested in pursuing further training. Thus, if at all possible, you should look for opportunities to obtain firsthand experience in an applied setting. Also, you should try to get to know and to be known by faculty members, not only to take advantage of the opportunity to profit from the interaction, but also to establish relationships that will be valuable when letters of recommendation are required. A very important factor these days is having presented or published research. Typically, this is achieved by finding a faculty mentor and working on his or her research team. Research takes time, so you should start work as a sophomore or junior if you want to have presentable results by graduation. Finally, try to get involved in departmental activities and take full advantage of the many opportunities you have in college.

After you have decided on possible universities to apply to for graduate school, the third step is to write for applications. You should apply to a variety of programs (at least 10 or 12). You should then make sure to register for all required admissions tests (GRE, etc.).

After application forms and other materials relevant to admission are received, be sure to read all of them carefully! Neatness is important (for clarity) and, if at all possible, type the forms. Most schools require at least the following:

1. Application Form
2. Letters of Recommendation (from professors)
3. Official Transcript
4. GRE Scores

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**It is your responsibility to make certain all materials reach the college or university.**

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- First, when asking for a letter of recommendation, you should provide a stamped, addressed envelope and request permission to check back with the professor to make sure the letter has been sent.
- Second, when requesting a transcript, you can ask when the transcript will be sent and check back after that date to make sure that it was sent.
- Third, if the school to which you've applied does not respond within a reasonable amount of time, you should send a self-addressed postcard to the school to ask if all parts of your application have been received. This should be done at least three weeks before the school's application deadline.

## Current Job Market in Psychology

### Jobs Available

Positions available for graduates within the field of psychology depend upon the degree(s) the person holds. For a person with a bachelor's degree in psychology, psychological technician-type jobs in state hospitals or institutions for persons with developmental disabilities often are available. Starting salaries in this area are typically \$20,000-\$25,000.

A master's degree in psychology greatly increases the number, variety, and quality of job opportunities. Besides state hospitals or homes for persons with developmental disabilities, a person with a master's degree also may find employment with community mental health facilities, campus counseling centers, governmental agencies (court systems, rehabilitation services, etc.), and research institutes. Also, it is possible for a person with an M.S. in psychology to find a teaching position at a community college, although these positions are scarce in the academic community. People filling master's-level positions usually have more responsibility and are more directly involved with therapy or the research area of their choice than those filling bachelor's-level positions. Beginning salaries for these positions range around \$30,000-\$40,000 in this area at the time of publication.

A person with a Ph.D. in psychology, generally speaking, has the most options for employment. The doctoral-level psychologist can enter private practice (after meeting licensing requirements), qualify to receive grants for research, teach, seek an administrative position, or function in any position also open to a person with a master's degree. Typical starting salaries are about \$45,000-\$60,000.

It should be noted that current employment opportunities are better for people seeking positions in applied areas of psychology (clinical, counseling, industrial, etc.) than for people seeking academic or research positions. More information about the types of jobs available for psychology majors at all levels is presented in *Careers in Psychology*, published by the American Psychological Association ([www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)). Also, at MSU, the Career Services Center (CSC) keeps a list of current job opportunities in this part of the country, along with the salaries offered for each. The CSC also maintains a current list of potential employers for psychology graduates at all levels.

Third, many job opportunities appear in the American Psychological Association's *Monitor* (newsletter). Often, Psychology Department faculty in your areas of interest will know of potential employers, as well.

## Finding a Job

Many psychology majors plan to enter the job market immediately following the acquisition of their B.A. or B.S. degree, while others will do graduate work first. Eventually, however, everyone will be looking for a job, and there are some important things you need to know about the process. Of primary importance in any job search is knowing where to look. Some people consult the classified ads of local newspapers and of professional journals and find what they are looking for that way. Most, however, are not that fortunate and require professional help to match themselves with a potential employer. For the student at Mississippi State, there are three major sources of available help. First, there is the Career Services Center. The CSC can help with all phases of the job search and provides all of its services free of charge to all students. A second source of help is the state employment agency in the state in which the student wishes to locate a job. Both the CSC and state agencies frequently know of unpublicized job opportunities. The services of state employment agencies also are free. Finally, there are commercial agencies that, for a fee, match people to jobs for which they are qualified. These fees are usually paid by the potential employer, but not always. As the amount of these fees can be quite large, it is in the job seeker's best interest to try other resources first.

Once a potential employer has been located, it is necessary to prepare for contact with the person or organization. **This involves a four-step process:**

1. Filling out application forms and/or writing letters of introduction,
2. The resume,
3. The interview, and
4. Having references sent.

**All of these forms of contact have the same purpose—procurement of a job—and all should be taken quite seriously. Failure to meet standards in any one of these areas can cause an otherwise qualified candidate to fail to get the job.**

**Most job applications begin with a cover letter sent with completed application forms. The CSC recommends that this letter include the following:**

1. State the position you are seeking and how the opening came to your attention,
2. State your qualifications for the position and express interest in the organization to which the application is being made,
3. Refer the reader's attention to the application form(s) and resume enclosed, and
4. Make a definite request for an interview and enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for reply.

**All of these materials should be neatly typed, because it is from this paperwork that the potential employer's first impression of you will be formed.**

**It also is important that the resume enclosed be complete and accurate. Every resume should include as many of the following components as are applicable:**

1. Statement of professional objectives,
2. Education (usually college information is sufficient),
3. Professional affiliations,
4. Experience,
5. Honors and activities,
6. References.

1

The interview stage is one of the most crucial stages in the job-seeking process, and one at which many people are not successful because they are unaware of good interview strategy. Employers are seeking enthusiastic, courteous, talented, and confident people. Your goal should be to convince the potential employer that you are this kind of person. A good personal appearance does count, as do promptness and maturity. It also helps to make a good impression if you display a sense of humor and if you seek a realistic position and salary level. This does not mean that you should sell yourself short—only that you should be willing to accept the same salary and title that other persons with your level of education and amount of experience are given. One thing that never fails to make a bad impression is evasiveness—the maintenance of good eye contact can prevent the potential employer from thinking that you are trying to evade questions. Also, the job interview is not a good place to express radical views or differences of opinion with previous employers or other authority figures.

2

References are also an important form of contact with the potential employer. These should be from people who have firsthand knowledge of your qualifications for the position, as well as a high opinion of you as a person. Previous supervisors and/or professors for whom you've worked make good employment references. Relatives, friends, and politicians do not. It is often worthwhile when requesting a letter of reference to ask if the person can write you a strong letter of support. If he or she has any reservations about you, it is better to seek another person to write you a letter. You should give the person who will write you a letter of recommendation a stamped, addressed envelope. In addition, waiving your right to review the recommendation letter may give the resulting letter more credibility; i.e., the recommender is not just saying nice things because he or she knows that you may read the letter.

3

Finally, it never hurts to follow up. A letter written the day after the interview thanking the potential employer for his or her time and restating your interest in the position and the company can only help.