Howard University
Clinical Psychology PhD Program
Frequently Asked Questions

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EXPANDED FAQs

I. CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY PHD PROGRAM FAQs

1. Is the program APA Accredited?
The American Psychological Association has accredited our doctoral program in Clinical Psychology. Our most recent site visit was Fall 2014. Questions related to the program’s accreditation status should be directed to the Commission on Accreditation.

APA Contact Information:
American Psychological Association
Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation
750 First Street, NE. Washington, DC. 20002-4242
Phone: 202-336-5979; TDD/TTY: 202-336-6123; Fax: 202-336-5978

2. Who is the Director of Clinical Training (DCT) your program?
As of June 1st, 2015, Dr. Ronald Hopson, PhD (a licensed clinical psychologist), is the DCT of the Clinical Psychology Program at Howard University. He is one of the eight core clinical faculty. The core clinical faculty work in tandem with seven College of Medicine faculty to train students. Clinical is one of five program areas in the psychology department. The other four areas in the department are separate programs and have their own admission processes and leadership.

3. Is the program focused on research?
Yes. Howard University’s Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program trains students to be competent practitioners and researchers. On an average week during the school year, about twenty hours per week should be devoted to your research. We expect all students to present at conferences and/or submit a paper for publication each year.

4. Is Howard University’s Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology a good match for me?
Prospective applicants should carefully review the information found on this website. Consider whether or not our mission statement matches your training goals and whether the research of at least one of our faculty members matches your own interests. There is extensive research training and applicants with little or no interest in developing research skills or conducting research will not find our program good “fit.”

5. I know that Howard University is a Historically Black University (HBCU). Are the majority of the students and faculty Black?
Howard University has a diverse, multicultural faculty and student body. Howard enrolls more than 11,000 students who come from virtually every state and from nearly 200 foreign countries, speaking a wide variety of languages. Its faculty is comprised of women and men from a variety of national, racial, and ethnic backgrounds who have distinguished themselves not only as
educators, but also as researchers, practitioners, authors, consultants, and activists. We invite applications from all interested students.

6. Where can I find a copy of the Clinical Psychology Student Handbook?
The handbook is available to applicants upon interview day. Please visit the psychology department’s website for a list of courses required of clinical psychology graduate students.

7. Are there opportunities to collaborate within the department and across campus on research projects?
Yes. Howard University values interdisciplinary training and research. Currently, Clinical faculty and students have collaborations with other psychology areas including Social, Personality and Neuropsychology. Faculty members and students also have productive relationships and research collaborations with Howard University Hospital, the Cancer Center, Genome Center, Surgery and Nephrology, the Department of Psychiatry, the School of Divinity, and the Department of Biology, along with other departments.

8. I am interested in specializing in Neuropsychology. What are the requirements and will it take longer to have this “minor”?
All adult track clinical psychology graduate students will minor in Neuropsychology by default. Please refer to the psychology department’s website for the sample trajectory for adult track students. It does not take longer to complete this minor if you are on schedule with all program milestones. Child track students will minor in Developmental Psychology by default. The psychology department’s website also has a sample trajectory for child track graduate students.

9. Are there practicum and externship opportunities on campus?
Yes. Howard University offers opportunities to gain clinical hours at the Mental Health Clinic, the University’s Counseling Center, and through a network of individual practitioners who are employees and affiliates of Howard University. There are also future possibilities at the Howard University’s Cancer Center.

10. Can I work full-time or part-time while in the program?
No. We do not advise students to work. With classes, research, and eventually clinical work, the program adds up to 40+ hours per week. At least twenty hours per week of that should be devoted to your research. All students must complete various research projects, including at least a thesis (if a prior one is not approved) and dissertation.

11. Can the program be completed in less than 5 years, provided that some of my credits transfer and I take summer courses?
Required clinical courses are not offered in the summer. Typically students do not finish in less than 5 years (before internship) because of other obligations aside from coursework including practica and externship experience, research milestones, comprehensive examinations, and internship. Training is sequential.

12. Are classes offered during the day, at night, or both? How many times per week do students generally attend each class?
Howard University is a traditional graduate program in Clinical Psychology. Classes are offered during the day and occasionally in the evening. Your class schedule depends on the course and instructor. Courses are typically 2.5 hours, once per week. However, it is not unusual that a course requires shorter meetings twice per week. Some courses have a lab component that requires additional weekly meetings. Students are expected to have 100% attendance. In addition to classes, twenty hours per week should be devoted to your research.
13. Are courses in Statistics and Research Methods required?
If you have a Master’s degree that is not approved by the graduate school director or if you do not have a Master's degree you must take and pass Statistics I, Statistics II, and Research Methods.

14. How many faculty members are necessary on a Dissertation Committee?
The dissertation committee is made up of a minimum of four faculty members from the department of psychology including your research advisor. The fifth member must be from outside of the department and attain graduate faculty status from the College of Arts and Sciences graduate school.

15. Where do you expect your graduates to be employed after obtaining their PhD?
We expect graduates from our program to seek employment in a variety of academic and applied settings including universities and colleges, research institutes, hospitals, clinics, and government organizations.

II. MASTER’S DEGREE FAQs

16. Is Howard University’s Clinical Psychology Graduate Program a PhD or Master’s program?
Howard University’s Clinical Psychology program is not a terminal Master's program. All students receive their PhD and fulfill a Master’s requirement en route.

17. What if I only want a Master’s degree?
You should not apply to the Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology at Howard University if you want a terminal Master’s degree.

18. Do I need a Master’s degree before I can gain admittance into the Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology?
No. Students in the Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology can obtain a Master's Degree en route to the PhD. Candidates are often accepted into our program with only a bachelor's degree. Please remember that a Master’s degree in any discipline, including psychology, will not preclude you from taking doctoral courses at HU.

19. Will you accept my Master’s degree?
Acceptance of a previously earned Master’s degree (from a different department at Howard, different institution, or different discipline) is judged on a case-by-case basis. Applicants that apply to our program may have a Master’s degree in the social sciences that may parallel clinical psychology theories and practices. We typically accept empirical (i.e., research-based) Master’s thesis. For example, Master’s theses have included primary or secondary quantitative analyses, or a quantitative meta-analysis. Furthermore, the empirical thesis has to be approved by the Director of the Graduate Program in Psychology. These decisions are made after an applicant is accepted into the program.

20. Is my tenure in the program shorter if I have a Master’s degree?
This will be judged on a case-by-case basis. Upon acceptance to and enrollment in the program, the Director of the Graduate Program will decide which credits you may transfer. In some cases, 1-3 classes may transfer from a Master’s program in the social sciences.

21. How many faculty members must serve on a Master’s committee?
The Master's examination committee is made up of three faculty members from the psychology department including your research advisor.

III. APPLICATION AND ADMISSION FAQs

22. How are admissions decisions made?
Each year, there are more applicants than slots available for Howard University's Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology. Admissions decisions are made by a committee, which is comprised of faculty members from the Department of Psychology, including the Director of Clinical Training. The committee considers a number of things in making these decisions, including GRE scores, undergraduate GPA, recommendation letters, applicant interests and goals, research experience, “fit” with the program, and whether the applicant’s research interests match with specific faculty members’ research interests. Applicants work closely with a research advisor for his/her tenure in the program. We are a mentor-based program, thus the admissions committee and a potential research mentor must agree on your admission. Research lab availability varies each year. We strongly advise that you contact the faculty mentor you are interested in working with (should be core clinical faculty) to check for lab availability for the year you are applying. Please note that your file will be incomplete and not reviewed if you do not fill out BOTH the graduate school application AND the clinical psychology supplemental application.

23. How competitive is your program?
Our program is quite competitive. We receive 125 + applications each year for only 3-4 student slots. We are highly selective and look for 6 pillars: exemplar recommendation letters, strong GRE scores, quality research experiences, competitive GPA, a coherent personal statement and strong interpersonal skills. We are a mentor-based program; thus the admissions committee and a potential research mentor must agree on your admission. Research lab availability varies each year. We strongly advise that you contact the faculty mentor you are interested in working with (should be core clinical faculty) to check for lab availability for the year you are applying.

24. What is the timeline for making admissions decisions?
The application deadline is December 1st for those seeking admission in the fall of the next year. We begin reviewing applications shortly after the deadline and make decisions about which candidates we wish to interview in late January or early February. Interviews are conducted in February, and admissions decisions are made a couple weeks after all of the interviews are complete.

25. When are the interviews for Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program applicants?
All applicants are required to interview, usually in early February. If an applicant is not invited for an interview, it likely means they are no longer under consideration for acceptance to the program. We believe interviewing is a vital experience for applicants in deciding whether Howard University is the right place for them. The yearly application deadline is December 1st.

26. How many students are admitted each year into the program?
We admit between 3 and 6 students each year.

27. Do I need to have previous research experience with a clinical psychologist?
No, but previous research experience with a clinical psychologist is preferred. Research experience can also be with psychologists in other disciplines (e.g., biopsychology, cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, social psychology). Experience can also be with
professionals in related disciplines other than psychology (e.g., psychiatry, public health, social work).

28. Do I have to take the GRE? What about the Psychology GRE?
Yes. The GRE is required for every applicant. The Psychology Subject GRE is optional. Your application will not be evaluated without GRE scores. In addition, the GRE must have been taken within the last five years. If the GRE has been taken more than once, the highest score will be considered.

29. How important are GRE scores, and what are the typical GRE scores that successful applicants have?
GRE scores are important, but as indicated above, many other things also are considered in admissions decisions. In general, higher GRE scores are viewed more favorably than lower GRE scores, but high GRE scores do not guarantee admission. Please see the Student Admissions, Outcomes, and Other Data link on the Howard University Clinical Psychology PhD Program website for basic requirements and details about program admissions:
http://www.coas.howard.edu/psychology/clinical/statistics.html

30. How important is my undergraduate GPA, and how high does it have to be for me to get in?
The undergraduate GPA is important. However, we understand that GPAs vary depending upon the particular institution attended, the particular courses taken, etc. Undergraduate GPAs are evaluated on a case-by-case basis, but our successful candidates typically have very high GPAs (over 3.5 on a 4.0 scale).

31. Do I need to have an undergraduate degree in Psychology?
An undergraduate degree in psychology is highly preferred to provide a basic foundation for graduate level psychology coursework. Also, because the program has a strong research emphasis, which includes a quantitative component, college-level math and statistics courses also can be helpful.

32. Can I be admitted in the spring semester?
No. All admissions decisions are made during the spring semester for students beginning in the fall semester.

33. Can I ask a faculty member or the Director of Clinical Training to do a cursory review of my application materials?
Due to time constraints and limited availability, the DCT is not able to review application materials prior to the December 1st application deadline. You may contact the DCT if you have a question about the program that is not covered by these FAQs. Otherwise, a pre-interview with the DCT may put you at unfair advantage; however, you are encouraged to contact professors with research interests similar to yours, as we are a mentor-based program. The admissions committee and a potential research mentor must agree on your admission. Research lab availability varies each year. We strongly advise that you contact the mentor (should be core clinical faculty) you are interested in working with to check for availability for the year you are applying.

34. Is there an orientation for incoming students in the Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program?
Yes. Program orientation usually takes place sometime in the week before classes begin in the Fall. The duration and date of orientation varies on a year-to-year basis. You will be notified by
the DCT over the summer about program orientation. The Graduate School also hosts a yearly orientation for all graduate students the week before classes start in the Fall. You will be notified by the Graduate School over the summer about graduate student orientation.