What is Clinical Psychology?

The field of Clinical Psychology integrates science, theory, and practice to understand, predict, and alleviate maladjustment, disability, and discomfort as well as to promote human adaptation, adjustment, and personal development. Clinical Psychology focuses on the intellectual, emotional, biological, psychological, social, and behavioral aspects of human functioning across the life span, in varying cultures, and at all socioeconomic levels.—APA Division 12

Preparation for a Clinical PhD Program

GPA/Coursework

- Admission into a PhD program in Clinical Psychology is very competitive.
- Best applicants have a 3.7 or higher cumulative GPA.
- In terms of coursework, the most important thing you can do is take a diverse set of courses and perform well in ALL of them. **Try not to avoid a subject (especially science and math), it shows.**
- PSY 280: Abnormal Psychology is popular for students interested in Clinical Psychology. Additionally, your performance in PSY 295: Data Analysis in Psychological Research and PSY 395 Design and Measurement will be critical to the admission process. Finally, take courses that allow you to continually work on your writing skills. Writing is essential in graduate school.

Graduate Record Examination (GRE)

- Almost all PhD programs require students to take the GRE, which is a standardized test for graduate school. Some programs require students to take the Psychology Subject Specific GRE, which is only offered three times a year as a paper based test. This means you must plan ahead.
- Check out the GRE website at www.gre.org to begin gaining the knowledge you need to start studying. It is recommended that you take the GRE during the summer before your senior year. This means preparation is critical during the spring of your junior year.
- Your GRE score is an important part of the admission process. This is because it is administered and scored in a consistent manner whereas GPAs are locally determined and therefore cannot be relied on as a consistent measure of academic ability.
- Most clinical programs desire candidates who have GRE scores above the seventy-fifth percentile. Competitive programs will require higher scores

Letters of Recommendation

- Three letters of recommendation are required for most graduate programs.
- In general, PhD programs place a greater value on letters of recommendation from PhD-level faculty members. Only a person with a PhD can talk realistically about your ability to do PhD-level work.
- Having *strong* letters of recommendation is critical. You must get to know faculty members very well to receive such letters. One of the best ways to get to know faculty members is by getting involved in research which is also critical for admission into any PhD program in Psychology.
Research Experience
- Research experience is a vital piece for admission into any Psychology PhD graduate program
- Most competitive applicants have at least two years of quality research experience
- Quality research experience is important because it can help you…
  - Clarify your own personal research interests
  - Decide if you want to spend a minimum of five to seven years conducting research
  - Build relationships with faculty members needed for strong letters of recommendation
- Completing your own original research such as a senior thesis can set you apart. It is becoming more and more common for students to take time off in between undergrad and grad school to complete such research.

Research Interest/Fit
- Clinical PhD programs are set up as a mentorship model. This means you are expected to work with one faculty member or a small group of faculty members throughout your PhD program. For this reason, you should only apply to programs that have faculty members conducting research within your area(s) of interest.
- Fit with a specific faculty member/program is critical to the admission process. Strong applicants have a clear research interest and apply only to schools/faculty that fit their interests.

Clinical Psychology Ph.D. Program Expectations and Timeline
- Clinical Psychology programs expect students to be active researchers and competent practitioners.
- Students gain a broad foundation and understanding of the clinical psychology field.
- **Programs typically take between five and seven years to complete.** Within that period of time, students can receive both their masters and PhD in Clinical Psychology.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year:</th>
<th>Requirements:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One to Two</td>
<td>Complete masters-level coursework and thesis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two through Seven</td>
<td>Engage in training on intervention and assessment</td>
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<td>Three</td>
<td>Take your comprehensive exams</td>
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<td>Four to Five</td>
<td>Complete your dissertation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Six to Seven</td>
<td>Complete your clinical internship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seven and Beyond</td>
<td>Complete 2000 hours of supervised therapy and your licensing exam to become an independent practitioner</td>
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Job Opportunities
Clinical Psychologists work throughout the United States in a variety of settings including individual practice, mental health service units, managed healthcare organizations, hospitals, schools, universities, industries, legal systems, medical systems, counseling centers, governmental agencies, and military services.—APA Division 12

References

To find out more check:
- http://psychology.msu.edu/clinical
- www.apa.org

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