Industrial and Organizational Psychology

Industrial and Organizational (I/O) Psychology is the scientific study of the workplace. Rigor and methods of psychology are applied to issues of critical relevance to business, including talent management, coaching, assessment, selection, training, organizational development, performance, and work-life balance.—SIOP

Master’s Degree vs. Ph.D. in I/O Psychology

Typically, those who pursue a master’s degree work in areas of applied organizational psychology such as organizational development, training, or as a human resource specialist. Entrance into master’s degree programs is slightly less stringent than Ph.D. programs. Those who pursue a Ph.D. get a specialist degree and are prepared to enter academia, do private consulting work for both public and private organizations, or conduct research.

Preparation for a Master’s Degree in I/O Psychology

GPA/Coursework

- Admission into any graduate program is competitive.
- Best applicants for a master’s degree have a 3.5 cumulative GPA or higher.
- 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 math), it shows.
- Undergraduate coursework in Organizational Psychology (PSY 255), Data Analysis in Psychological Research (PSY 295), Research Design and Measurement in Psychological Research (PSY 395), Organizational Research Techniques (PSY 455), and the Business Psychology Internship (PSY 382).

Graduate Record Examination (GRE)

- Individual programs determine whether or not the GRE is a required part of their admissions criteria. To determine if you need to take the GRE, check the program’s website. For more information about taking the GRE, see page two.

Letters of Recommendation

- Three letters of recommendation are required for most graduate programs.
- 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.
- Completing the Business Psychology Internship Course is a way to get applied I/O experience and secure another letter of recommendation.

Human Resource and Labor Relations

Those interested in pursuing a master’s degree in I/O may also be interested in Human Resources and Labor Relations (HRLR). A master’s degree in HRLR is an applied program. Graduates work in the private, public, and non-profit sectors of the economy.

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<th>Operations Consultant</th>
<th>Sample Jobs:</th>
<th>Field Examiner</th>
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<td>Labor Relations Specialist</td>
<td>Human Resource Manager</td>
<td>Benefits Manager</td>
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Additional Preparation Needed for a Ph.D. in I/O Psychology

GPA:
- Admission into a PhD program in I/O Psychology is more competitive than admission into a master’s degree program. Best applicants for a PhD program have a 3.7 or higher cumulative GPA.

GRE:
- Almost all PhD programs require students to take the general GRE, which is a standardized test for graduate school. Some programs require students to take the Psychology Subject Specific GRE as well, 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.

Letters of Recommendation:
- 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.

Research:
- 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:
- I/O 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. Examples of I/O psychology research include personnel selection, training and development, organizational change, leadership and motivation, etc.

References


To find out more check:
- www.siop.org
- http://iopsych.msu.edu/
- www.aomonline.org/
- www.shrm.org

Revised August 2013

Department of Psychology ● Undergraduate Office ● 316 Physics Road Room 100 ● 353-7271 ● http://psychology.msu.edu