

Finding Graduate Programs in Psychology and Related Fields
Update September 18, 2023

We're going to walk through 5 steps to help you identify the graduate program that makes sense for you.

STEP 1. Answer this question: **What will graduate training prepare you to do?**

STEP 2. Answer this question: **What training/credentials are right for your career aspirations?**

STEP 3. Find programs: **Begin program search with reputable sources.**

STEP 4. Initial selection: **Begin assessing general program quality, focus, training requirements, and fit with your academic preparation and career goals.**

STEP 5. Final selection: **Is this the right program for me?**

STEP 6. **Start planning and preparing your applications to graduate programs.**

STEP 1. Answer this question: **What will graduate training prepare you to do?**

Know what you are looking for with a focus on your outcome. Going to graduate school is not an outcome. For instance, setting a goal of earning a Ph.D. in psychology is not going to help you in this process because it is not specific, and the educational plan (graduate school) should be viewed as the means to achieving your career aspirations. Therefore, establishing a clear sense of career aspirations (e.g., be a research psychologist at a university, be a family therapist, data scientist in the private or government sectors) will be key in finding the right program for you.

Don't know how to answer the question? Recommend visiting SLU's Career Services Center, speaking with your psychology major mentor, and doing your own research about specific career options.

STEP 2. Answer this question: **What training/credentials are right for your career aspirations?**

Now that you've identified your career goal(s), then get a handle on credentials. One of the best ways you can do this is by reviewing job information on the internet. Doing so will help you to:

1. Understand what the job market looks like for your career aspiration.
2. Appreciate expected income/salary
3. Gain clarity on sought-after qualifications (and potentially diverse pathways)

Places to search:

Job ads

- www.usajobs.gov
- www.higheredjobs.com
- www.indeed.com

Career databases

- <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/home.htm>
- <https://www.onetonline.org/>

STEP 3. Find programs: **Begin program search with reputable sources.**

You should have a good idea about what kind of programs to search for – so now it's time to find suitable programs. Thousands of programs. How to pick?

Suggested features to help down:

Master's level training

- General areas of program concentrations
- Courses taught and experiential learning opportunities
- Faculty research and professional interests (recent publications)

- Accreditation status (if applicable) – can also review listings of accredited programs (below)
- Programs other professionals have completed

PhD (and to some PsyD)

- General areas of program concentrations
- Courses taught and experiential learning opportunities
- Faculty interests and recent grants and publications (especially for PhD)
- Current graduate students and their works
- Accreditation status (if applicable) – can also review listings of accredited programs (below)
- Programs that other professionals have completed

An Incomplete List of Accrediting Bodies and Graduate Program Lists

- APA Accredited Programs (PhD/PsyD: Clinical, Counseling, or School Psychology): <https://www.accreditation.apa.org/accredited-programs>
- SIOP for Industrial Organizational Psychology Programs: <https://www.siop.org/Events-Education/Graduate-Training-Program>
- COAMFT for Marriage and Family Therapy Programs: https://www.coamfte.org/COAMFTE/Directory_of_Accredited_Programs/MFT_Training_Programs.aspx
- CSWE for Social Work Programs: <https://www.cswe.org/accreditation/directory/?>
- CACREP for Counseling Programs <https://www.cacrep.org/directory/>
- PhD in Experimental Psychology
Incomplete, but not a bad start: <https://gradstudy.apa.org/>

STEP 4. Initial selection: **Begin assessing general program quality, focus, training requirements, and fit with your academic preparation and career goals.**

Suggested features to review:

1. Faculty specialties, reputation (if possible), and recent publications (especially for PhD programs)
2. Accreditation reports (typically has number of years to graduate, % licensure, and the like)
3. Training components (coursework, internships, etc.)
4. Training model (single mentor, distributed, etc.)
5. Cost and financial support, if any
6. Profile of typical student application components (e.g., average GPA, GRE scores, etc.)
7. Acceptance rates

STEP 5. Final selection: **Is this the right program for me?**

1. You are confident you are academically prepared (this is NO TIME to fool yourself).
2. If the training model is single-mentor, reach out to the person you desire to have as your mentor – introduce yourself and why you would like to work with them, share your CV, and ask questions (are you accepting graduate students in your lab?). Keep it focused and brief.
3. Fill in the gaps that are not readily available on the website by reaching out to program directors or faculty:
 - a. What jobs do students get immediately after graduation?
 - b. What proportion are licensed (if appropriate)?
 - c. What kinds of financial support are available?
 - d. Would you work with one person or a team of faculty?
 - e. What is the mentoring model in the program?
 - f. Are there opportunities to speak with current graduate students?
 - g. How successful have current/past students been at ... [insert your desired professional activity, such as securing research grants, being placed at in the setting they desire, securing a position in the state/city/region ...]
 - h. Other questions you deem as appropriate.
4. If you decide to apply to a school, pay attention to deadlines and seek out application waivers, if needed.

STEP 6. **Start planning and preparing your applications to graduate programs.**

Next workshop!

Start by documenting your schools and keep information organized. Spreadsheets help:

| School | Program and link | Degree | Potential Faculty Mentor(s) | Application Deadlines | Requirements | Other details |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------|---|-----------------------|--|---|
| California State University Los Angeles | Psychology | M.A. | Dr. Mitchell Eisen (meisen@calstatela.edu) Suggestive line ups | February? | Statement (500 words) 3 letters Unofficial and official transcript | FAQs GPA 2.75 GRE not required |
| Missouri State | Experimental | MS | Dr. Ashley Payne Educational psychology and cultural identity | February 15 | Fee Transcripts GREs (no subject) Statement of goals Three letters | 3.00 cumulative 3.25 major (and last 20 credits) GRE verbal 151 , Quant 142 |

Visit the undergraduate resource site for more information:

<https://sites.google.com/slu.edu/slu-psych/next-steps-after-college-graduate-school-and-careers/graduate-studies-in-psychology>