PSYCHOLOGY - DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PHD)

The behavioral genetics program focuses on the study of genetic contributions to individual differences in behavior. The fundamental tenet of the behavioral neuroscience program is that a complete understanding of behavior entails unraveling mechanisms and principles at any and all levels of organization (i.e., behavior, neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, neurochemistry, gene expression and epigenetics).

The major training goals of the clinical psychology program follow the Boulder model in that the preparation of scientist-practitioner is stressed. Students are admitted for graduate studies leading to the PhD in one of five fields:

- behavioral genetics
- behavioral neuroscience (including learning and motivation)
- clinical psychology
- cognitive psychology
- social psychology

For detailed information about each field of study, visit the department’s Graduate Program Areas [graduate-programs/graduate-program-areas] webpage.

Note: The department does not offer a terminal master’s degree program.

Requirements

All students are admitted with the expectation that they will work toward the PhD degree. Many students receive a Master of Arts degree in the course of working toward the PhD. Students who receive the PhD degree must demonstrate that they are proficient in some broad subject of learning and that they can critically evaluate work in this field; furthermore, they must show the ability to work independently in their chosen field and must make an original contribution of significance to the advancement of knowledge.

In the first year of graduate study, all psychology graduate students enroll in a two-semester graduate statistical sequence. There is a first-year research requirement that starts the student on an active program of research. The student also must enroll in a sequence of courses designed to give exposure to various research topics and methods.

Before admission to candidacy for the PhD degree, the student must pass a comprehensive examination in the field of concentration and related fields. This examination tests the student mastery of a broad field of knowledge, not merely the formal course work completed.

A variety of advanced research seminars are taught on a regular basis. Students are required to be enrolled in at least one substantive course in the department each semester until the comprehensive examinations have been successfully completed. Upon completing the comprehensives, students engage in the dissertation research, culminating in a public oral defense.