

Handouts for online APA Workshop

**Preparing and Applying for Graduate School
in Psychology: 12 Modules**

*John C. Norcross, PhD, & Thomas P. Hogan, PhD
University of Scranton*

The 12 Workshop Modules

The Workshop Presenters

Two Formats for Curriculum Vitae (from *Insider's Guide*)

Mean Acceptance Rates of Graduate Programs in Psychology (from APA)

Mean Acceptance Rates and Financial Assistance by Type of APA-Accredited
Program in Clinical Psychology (from Norcross, Ellis, & Sayette, 2010)

Average GPAs and GREs of First-Year Graduate Students in Psychology (from
APA)

Organization Table for Graduate Applications (from *Insider's Guide*)

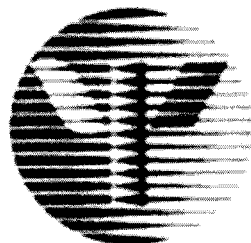
Sample Letter to Request a Letter of Recommendation (from *Insider's Guide*)

Interview Questions an Applicant Might Ask (from *Insider's Guide*)

Common Interview Questions to Anticipate (from *Insider's Guide*)

Student Reasons for Choosing a Clinical Psychology Program (from *Insider's
Guide*)

References and Resources



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The 12 Workshop Modules

1. Getting Started and Introducing the Fundamentals
2. Reviewing Career Options in Psychology
3. Constructing Your Time Line
4. Getting the Necessary Courses, Research, and Experiences
5. Facing and Conquering the GREs
6. Understanding Admission Criteria and Acceptance Rates
7. Identifying Compatible Graduate Programs
8. Writing Personal Statements
9. Securing Letters of Recommendation
10. Completing Your Applications
11. Mastering Graduate Interviews
12. Making Final Decisions

About the Program

These 12 modules provide essential information and indispensable guidance for students preparing for and then applying to graduate school in psychology and allied disciplines.

Award-winning psychologist-educators Drs. John Norcross and Tom Hogan take prospective graduate students step-by-step through the preparation, application, interview, and admission process. They present evidence-based and anxiety-reducing strategies for mastering each step.

Norcross and Hogan share their decades of advising experience and research findings in these engaging, 20 to 25-minute programs. The 12 modules can be tailored to a student's or professor's needs, watched separately or sequentially.

All 12 videotaped modules are offered free of charge on the American Psychological Association (APA) website courtesy of the APA Education Directorate and the presenters. In addition, interspersed throughout are the best single pieces of advice for getting into graduate school offered by prominent psychologists and APA leaders.

PowerPoint slides accompany all 12 programs, as do handouts adapted from *APA's Graduate Study in Psychology*, the *Insider's Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical and Counseling Psychology*, and the presenters' original research.

The Workshop Presenters

A clinical psychologist, **John C. Norcross, PhD, ABPP**, is Distinguished Professor of Psychology at the University of Scranton and Adjunct Professor of Psychiatry at SUNY Upstate Medical University. Dr. Norcross has co-written or edited 20 books, including the *Insider's Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical & Counseling Psychology* and the 5-volume *APA Handbook of Clinical Psychology*. He has received multiple professional awards, including APA's Distinguished Career Contributions to Education & Training Award, the Pennsylvania Professor of the Year from the Carnegie Foundation, and election to the National Academies of Practice. He serves on the Board of Educational Affairs and APA's governing Council of Representatives.

A quantitative psychologist, **Thomas P. Hogan, PhD**, is Professor of Psychology and Distinguished University Fellow at the University of Scranton, where for 10 years he served as Dean of the Graduate School. He was formerly Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate and Professional Programs at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. Dr. Hogan has won every teaching award offered by the University. He is author of several nationally standardized tests and of numerous books and articles related to psychological and educational measurement. In his positions, he has personally reviewed thousands of graduate school applications.

The presenters gratefully acknowledge the American Psychological Association, particularly the Education Directorate and its staff, for their support.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Chris Smith
Address: 15 Easy Street
Babylon, NY 12345
Telephone: (516) 555-1212
E-mail: csmith@babu.edu
Citizenship: United States of America

Education:
H.S. Diploma Cherry Hill High School, City, State, June 2011
B.S. (anticipated) Psychology, Babylon University, May 2014

Honors and Awards:

New York State Regents Scholarship, 2011–2014
Dean's List, Babylon University, 2012–2014
Psi Chi, International Honor Society in Psychology, 2013
Babylon University Honors Program, 2011–present
Who's Who Among Students in American Colleges & Universities, 2013

Clinical Experience:

Mental Health Technician, Friendship House, Jackson, Wyoming, June 2012–August 2013. Duties: recreational counseling and supervision of 20 behaviorally and emotionally disturbed children. Supervisor: Doris Day, M.S. 40 hours weekly.
Telephone Counselor, Mesopotamia County Community Crisis Center, Babylon, New York, 2011–2012. Duties: used a crisis intervention model to counsel a wide range of callers. Supervisor: Randal Kaplan, M.A. 4 hours weekly.

Research Experience:

Research Assistant, Babylon University, Department of Psychology, September 2011–June 2012. Duties: word processing, manuscript preparation, and data analyses for Theodore Demanding, Ph.D. 15 hours weekly.
Honors Research, Babylon University with Rita Murrow, Ph.D., 2008–2010. Duties: proposed and conducted an original project; data input and analysis using SPSSx; write-up and oral defense.

Professional and Honor Societies:

Psi Chi, International Honor Society in Psychology
American Psychological Association (student affiliate)
Alpha Gamma Epsilon Omega (National Honor Society in Ergonomics)

Presentations and Publications:

Smith, C., & Murrow, F. A. (2012, April). *Self-esteem and math performance: Another look*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Babylon Psychological Association, New York.
Murrow, F. A., & Smith, C. (2013). The effects of self-esteem on math test performance. *Journal of Psychology*, 46, 113–117.

Campus Activities and Leadership:

Psychology Club, member (2012–2013) and president (2013–present)
University Singers, Babylon University, 2011–2013
Hand-in-Hand, participant (2009–2011) and campus coordinator (2013)

References:

Frances Murrow, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Babylon University, Babylon, NY 12345. Voice: 516-555-1212; e-mail: murrow@babu.edu
Theodore Demanding, Ph.D., Professor and Chair, Department of Psychology, Babylon University, Babylon, NY 12345. Voice: 516-555-1212; e-mail: les@babu.edu
Doris Day, M.S., Senior Therapist, Children's House, 78 Oak Street, Jackson, WY 12345. Voice: 307-555-1212

FIGURE 6-1. One format for curriculum vitae.

Chris Smith

November 2014

Personal History:

Business Address: Department of Psychology
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 Babylon, New York 12345

Phone: (516) 555-1212

Home Address: 1017 Jefferson Avenue
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Phone: (609) 555-1212

E-mail: csmith@babu.edu

Citizenship: United States of America

Educational History:

Babylon University, Babylon, New York

Major: Psychology

Degree: B.S. (anticipated), May 2014

Dean's List, 2010–2012

Who's Who Among Students in American Colleges & Universities, 2013

Honors Thesis: Investigation of the relationship between self-esteem and math performance (Chairperson: Rita Murrow, Ph.D.)

Professional Positions:

1. Telephone Counselor, Mesopotamia County Community Crisis Center, Babylon, New York. Part-time position, 2011–2013. Duties: used a crisis intervention model to counsel a wide range of callers. Supervisor: Randal Kaplan, M.A.
2. Mental Health Technician, Friendship House, Jackson, Wyoming. Full-time summer, 2012. Duties: recreational counseling and supervision of 20 behaviorally and emotionally disturbed children. Supervisor: Doris Day, M.S.
3. Research Assistant, Babylon University. Half-time position, 2011–2013. Duties: word processing, manuscript preparation, and data analysis. Supervisor: Theodore Demanding, Ph.D.

Membership in Professional Associations:

Psi Chi (International Honor Society in Psychology)

American Psychological Association (student affiliate)

Alpha Gamma Epsilon Omega (National Honor Society in Ergonomics)

Professional Activities:

President, Babylon University Chapter of Psi Chi, 2012–2014

Member of Program Committee, Babylon University Psychology Conference, 2013

Papers Presented:

Smith, C. E., & Murrow, F. A. (2012, April). *Self-esteem and math performance: Another look*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Babylon Psychological Association, New York, NY.

Publication:

Murrow, F. A., & Smith, C. (2013). The effects of self-esteem on math test performance. *Journal of Psychology*, 46, 113–117.

Campus Activities:

Psychology Club, member (201–2013) and president (present)

University Singers, Babylon University, 2011–2013

Hand-in-Hand, participant (2011–2013) and campus coordinator (2013)

References:

Frances Murrow, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Babylon University, Babylon, NY 12345. Voice: 516-555-1212; e-mail: murrow@babu.edu

Theodore Demanding, Ph.D., Professor and Chair, Department of Psychology, Babylon University, Babylon, NY 12345. Voice: 516-555-1212; e-mail: les@babu.edu

Doris Day, M.S., Senior Therapist, Children's Hospital, 78 Oak Street, Jackson, WY 12345. Voice: 307-555-1212

Note. Adapted from Hayes & Hayes (1989) with permission of the authors.

FIGURE 6-2. Another format for curriculum vitae.

**Mean Acceptance Rates of Graduate Psychology Programs
(% of students who apply and are accepted to a particular program)**

Area	Masters	Doctoral
Clinical Psychology	37%	(see next)
Clinical Neuropsychology	---	26% ^a
Cognitive Psychology	40%	16%
Community Psychology	61%	24%
Counseling Psychology	63%	12%
Developmental Psychology	44%	20%
Educational Psychology	57% ^a	48%
Experimental Psychology	39%	15%
Health Psychology	41%	16%
Industrial/Organizational Psychology	52%	27%
Neuroscience	32% ^a	15%
Quantitative Psychology	78%	36%
School Psychology	34%	31%
Social & Personality Psychology	39%	12%

Sources: American Psychological Association. (2010). *Graduate Applications, Acceptances, Enrollments, and Degrees Awarded to Master's- and Doctoral-Level Students in U.S. and Canadian Graduate Departments of Psychology: 2008-2009*.

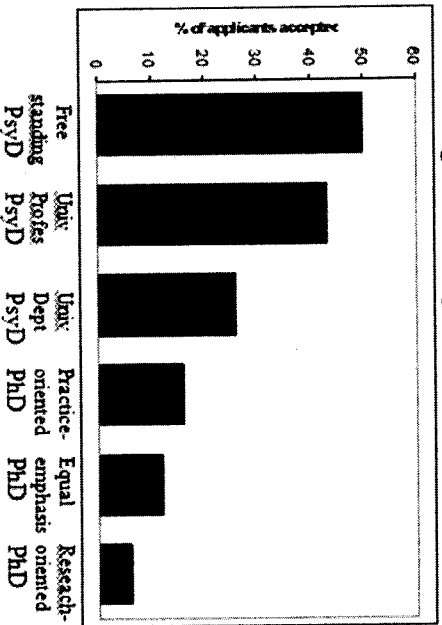
^aData taken from Norcross, J. C., Kohout, J. L., & Wicherski, M. (2005). Graduate study in psychology: 1971 to 2004. *American Psychologist*, 60, 959-975.

Mean Acceptance Rates & Financial Assistance by Type of APA-Accredited Program in Clinical Psychology

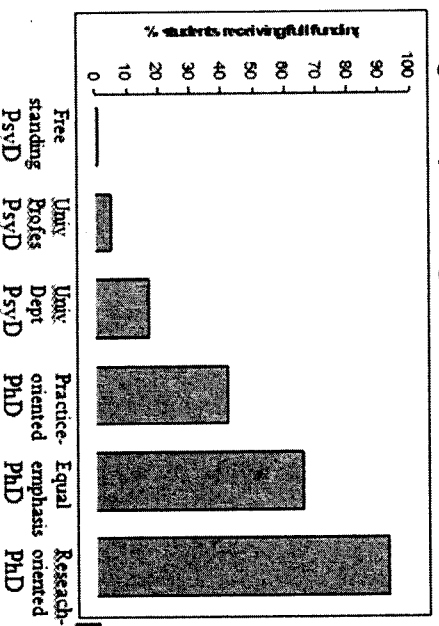
	Free-standing PsyD	University-based PsyD	Practice-oriented PhD	Equal-emphasis PhD	Research-oriented PhD
% of applicants accepted	50%	35%	16%	14%	7%
% of incoming students given					
tuition waiver only	0%	1%	7%	3%	0%
assistantship only	13%	22%	57%	20%	8%
waiver and assistantship	1%	12%	42%	54%	89%

Source: Norcross, J. C., Ellis, J. L., & Sayette, M. A. (2010). Getting in and getting money: A comparative analysis of admission standards, acceptance rates, and financial assistance across the research-practice continuum in clinical psychology programs. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 4, 99-104.

Getting In: Average Acceptance Rates



Getting Money: Average % Receiving Full Support



Average GPAs and GREs of First-Year Graduate Students in Psychology

Measure	Minimum Required for Consideration Mean	Actual Scores of Incoming Students Mean
Doctoral Departments		
Graduate Record Examination*		
Verbal Reasoning	154	158
Quantitative Reasoning	145	149
Verbal + Quantitative	300	308
GRE Psychology Subject Test	552	633
Grade point average		
Overall	3.11	3.54
Psychology	3.17	3.66
Master's Departments		
Graduate Record Examination*		
Verbal Reasoning	150	153
Quantitative Reasoning	141	146
Verbal + Quantitative	290	300
GRE Psychology Subject Test	495	577
Grade point average		
Overall	2.92	3.37
Psychology	3.05	3.48

Source: Norcross, J. C., Kohout, J. L., & Wicherski, M. (2005). Graduate study in psychology: 1971 to 2004. *American Psychologist*, 60, 959-975.

*The scores on this page have been converted from the old GRE score scale (200 – 800) to the new GRE score scale ($M = 150$, $SD = 10$) that began in August 2011. For details, see the GRE concordance tables at https://www.ets.org/s/gre/pdf/concordance_information.pdf

TABLE 7-1. Common Interview Questions to Anticipate

1. Why do you want to be a psychologist?
2. What qualifications do you have that will make you a successful psychologist?
3. What attracts you to our program?
4. Will you tell me a little about yourself as a person?
5. Do you think your undergraduate grades (or GRE scores) are valid indicators of your academic abilities?
6. What do you see as your strengths and weaknesses?
7. What do you bring into the program? What are your special attributes?
8. Have you ever had personal therapy? If yes, what sort of issues did you work on? If no, why not?
9. What are your research interests? Tell me about your research project/honors thesis.
10. What is your theoretical orientation?
11. Which of our faculty members do you think you would work with?
12. Where else have you applied or interviewed?
13. Can you tell me about a recent clinical encounter? How did you conceptualize or treat your last client?
14. What are your hobbies, avocations, favorite books, and interests outside of psychology?
15. What are your future plans and goals as a psychologist? Where do you want to be in 10 years?
16. How do you work under stress and pressure? Can you give me examples?
17. How will you finance your graduate education?
18. What attracts you to the Boulder (or Vail) model of training?
19. What is your interest in teaching during graduate school? In your career?
20. What questions do you have for me?

TABLE 6-2. Summary Table of a Student's Graduate Program Applications

School	Grad program	Deadline	Letter or form	Submission
Southwestern University	PhD clinical	December 15	Letter & form	Online
Midwestern University	PhD clinical	January 1	Letter & form	Mail directly to grad school
Pacific North University	PhD clinical	January 15	Letter & form	Online
Atlantic University	PhD clinical	February 1	Letter	Online
Northeast University	MS clinical	March 15	Form; letter optional	Either mail or online but online preferred
Regional College	MA psychology	March 22	Letter	Back to me in sealed envelope; I include it my application

November 2014

Leslie Jones, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology
East Coast University
1200 Faculty Building
Hausman, MD 43707

Dear Dr. Jones:

Thank you for agreeing to write a letter of recommendation on my behalf. I hereby waive (or do not waive) my right to inspect the letter of recommendation written for me and sent to the designated schools of my choice. I am applying to (master's, doctoral) programs in clinical (counseling) psychology. My earliest deadline is _____.

Here are the courses I have taken from you.

Fall 2012	Abnormal Psychology	A-
Spring 2013	Clinical Psychology	B+
Fall 2014	Undergraduate Research	

Here are other activities in which I have participated.

2013–2014	Research Assistant
2012–2014	Vice President of Psi Chi

My latest GRE scores were 156 Verbal, 160 Quantitative, and 5.0 Analytical Writing. My Psychology Subject Test score was 610.

(If applicable:)

In your laboratory in Fall 2013, while participating in undergraduate research, I was involved in several different activities. My responsibilities included entering participant data, conducting telephone screening interviews to determine participant eligibility, and coding several indices of social functioning during a key interaction period in the alcohol administration study. I also participated in the weekly journal club meetings.

Finally, I attach a copy of my current vitae and a list of psychology courses for any additional information that might prove useful. Please feel free to call me at 555-1212 or to e-mail me at Chris_smith@phonyemail.com. Thanks again.

Sincerely yours,

Chris Smith

Encls.

FIGURE 6-4. Sample letter to request a letter of recommendation.

TABLE 7-2. Interview Questions an Applicant Might Ask

Practice

Is training available in different theoretical orientations?
Is the supervision individual or group? Is it live supervision?
Do the full-time faculty conduct the clinical supervision?
What type of supervision will I receive?
When do I actually begin clinical work?
How many practica are offered?
What are your off-campus clinical practica like? Where are they located?
What types of patient populations are available?
Are specialty clinics available?
How many of the full-time faculty are licensed?
Do the faculty have active private practices?
Do faculty serve as clinicians or consultants at local mental health facilities?

Research

How common is it for students to be coauthors on peer-reviewed publications?
What is the student-faculty ratio?
About how many dissertations and master's theses are chaired by each faculty member?
When and how am I assigned an advisor?
Does this person have weekly research meetings?
Could I sit in on a lab meeting?
How many core faculty members are actively involved in research projects (e.g., regularly publishing)?
How many research grants finance graduate students?
If I wanted to change my mentor or advisor, is that allowed?
How many computers are available to graduate students?
Are computers readily available? Is photocopying free?
Is SAS, SPSS, or R available?
What is the relationship with the medical or law school?

Finances

What percentage of students receive full financial support (assistantship plus tuition waiver)?
What types of fellowships are available?
What types of research and teaching assistantships are available?
What is the average amount of a 9-month assistantship?
Who gets tuition remission? What are my chances?
Do the stipends cover the costs of living in this area?
How expensive are the rents?
What percentage of students receive funding during the summer?
Do any of the assistantships include health insurance?
What percentage of students have taken out student loans?

Quality of Life

What is it like to live around campus? Is it safe?
Expensive?
What is the surrounding city/town like?
Is graduate housing available? Do most students live on campus?

What is the off-campus housing situation like? The neighborhoods?
Where can I go to get a housing application today?
Are there theaters, movies, decent restaurants nearby?
Is there public transportation, or do I need a car?
What are some of the campus events and clubs?
Is the Graduate Student Association active?
Do the students socialize frequently?
How is the student cohesion?
Do students and faculty attend the colloquia?
Can I speak to a couple of graduate students here?

Department and Politics

Do students and faculty have good relationships with each other?
Do graduate students have a role in departmental policy and admission decisions?
In your experience, what are the best and worst features of this program? (ask of graduate students)
What are one or two things you wished you knew before attending this program? (ask of graduate students)
What is the standing of the psychology department within the university?
How do the different branches of psychology interact?
What are the professional goals of the current students?
How many fifth-, sixth-, seventh- . . . year students are there?
Is there a sense of competition or cooperation among the students?
How much emphasis is put on course work and grades?
How common are grades of C?
Do professors tend to collaborate on projects?
Do I get a master's degree along the way? When is this usually done?
Can the program be undertaken on a part-time basis?
What percentage of the student body is part-time?
When do I take the qualifying exams? What are they like?
How many people fail? Can they be retaken?
Could I see a course schedule for next (or last) year?
Are teaching opportunities available for graduate students?
For applicants who already have a master's: Once accepted, how are transcripts evaluated regarding credits?

Outcomes

Where do your students complete their internships?
What percentage of your students obtains an APPIC or APA-accredited internship?
What is the average length of the program (including internship)?
What percentage of your incoming students eventually earn their doctorates here?
Do dissertations usually get published?
In what type of settings do most of your graduates eventually find employment—academic, private practice, clinics?

TABLE 8-1. Student Reasons for Choosing a Clinical Psychology Program

Reason	Boulder model/Ph.D.	Vail model/Psy.D.
	Mean rating	Mean rating
Sense of fit	4.61	4.50
Curriculum*	3.41	4.17
Geographic location*	3.40	3.85
Prestige/reputation of the university	3.59	3.76
Prestige/reputation of the faculty	3.80	3.53
Gut feeling*	3.20	3.67
Discussions with program students	3.69	3.34
Theoretical diversity of staff	3.08	3.33
Job placement record	3.05	3.21
Other	2.77	3.29
Interdisciplinary training*	2.79	3.23
Projected time to complete degree	2.73	3.02
Opportunity to work with specific faculty*	3.69	2.32
Friends and family living in geographic area	2.60	2.59
Connections for job possibilities in the area	2.31	2.67
Availability of female faculty	2.11	2.45
Safety of geographic area	2.27	2.33
Scholarship*	3.17	2.00
Availability of research assistantships*	3.50	1.87
Availability of teaching assistantships*	3.20	1.93
Other financial incentives*	2.98	1.99
Availability of minority faculty*	1.73	2.12
The only place I received an offer	2.13	1.83
Availability of job opportunity for partner	1.66	1.61
Availability of educational opportunity for partner	1.54	1.38
Other general factor	2.77	3.29

Note. Data adapted from McIlvried et al. (2010). Ratings on a 5-point scale where 1 = not at all important to 5 = very important.

*indicates statistically significant difference between students selecting Boulder model/Ph.D. programs and those selecting the Vail model/Psy.D. programs, $p < .001$.

ships over the years. Moreover, fellow students are essential sources of encouragement, companionship, and inspiration. You want a good, lasting fit with the program (Scott & Silka, 1974).

In choosing a graduate program, all students place a premium on general factors such as reputation of the university, the prestige of the faculty, training opportunities, and the emotional atmosphere. At the same time, ethnic minority applicants rate the relevance of multicultural factors higher than do white students (Bernal et al., 1999; Toia et al., 1997). These considerations include minority students in

the program, presence of minority faculty, research on minority topics, and opportunity to work with multicultural clients. Be particularly attentive to the program's diversity as it relates to your interests and goals.

The projected length of the doctoral program is a fairly important reason for choosing a particular program, as seen in the middle of Table 8-1. You may recall from Chapter 2 that clinical Ph.D. students take an average of 6 years to complete their doctorates, including the 1-year internship. Psy.D. students take an average of 5 years, a consistent difference of 1 to

References & Resources

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- Norcross, J. C., Ellis, J. L., & Sayette, M. A. (2010). Getting in and getting money: A comparative analysis of admission standards, acceptance rates, and financial assistance across the research-practice continuum in clinical psychology programs. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 4, 99-104.
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- Norcross, J. C., & Sayette, M. A. (2016). *Insider's guide to graduate programs in clinical and counseling psychology* (2016/2017 ed.). New York: Guilford.
- Norcross, J. C., Sayette, M. A., Stratigis, K. Y., & Zimmerman, B. E. (2014). Of course: Prerequisite courses for admission into APA-accredited clinical and counseling psychology programs. *Teaching of Psychology*, 41, 360-364.
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Websites cited in the Workshop:

- For GRE – www.ets.org/gre
- On interviewing – www.quintcareers.com and www.nextsteps.org
- For APA resources – www.apa.org/ed/resources/
- For program identification – www.Petersons.com