



# Finding Fit: Getting In and Getting Through

A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO APPLYING TO GRADUATE PSYCHOLOGY  
PROGRAMS

Caroline Cope, MA  
American Psychological Association

# It Is All About Fit

## Myth

*"I need to apply to 20 programs if I want to get into graduate school."*

## Fact

*Average acceptance rate for master's programs is 50%; for doctoral programs it is 14%*

## Truth

*"I need to apply to programs that are a good fit for my interests, previous training, and prepare me for type of career I want."*

# Think Beyond Getting Accepted



*You should be able to clearly describe, for any program you want to apply to:*

- What it takes to get into a program
- What it takes to get through the program
- What happens once you get out of the program

# Getting In

- Required courses before starting?
- Required tests?
- Required experiences (e.g., laboratory, work, community health)?
- Required essays or personal statements?

# Admissions Statistics

- ▶ Master's

- ▶ 73% of programs require the GRE-General
- ▶ Median scores for accepted students: 154 Verbal, 150 Quantitative
- ▶ Average undergraduate GPA: 3.5

- ▶ Doctoral

- ▶ 92% of programs require the GRE-General
- ▶ Median scores for accepted students: 158 Verbal, 155 Quantitative
- ▶ Average undergraduate GPA: 3.67

# Getting Through



- What is the process for finding a research advisor and/or mentor?
- What are the dissertation/thesis requirements?
- Are there teaching requirements?

# Getting Through

- Are there required internships?
  - APA-Accredited (clinical, counseling, school)
  - Master's
  - Applied (I/O, etc.)

# Getting Through



- If licensure is a goal, how successful are students with securing internship placements?
- If research is a goal, how successful are students at receiving funding and publishing papers?

# Getting Out

- How long does it take students to complete the program?
- If licensure is a goal, what is the program's licensure rate for its graduates?
- If research is a goal, how successful are graduates in securing postdoctoral research positions or starting research careers?

# How Do Programs Determine Fit?

- ▶ Criteria used by programs to evaluate applicants:
  - ✓ Previous course work
  - ✓ GPAs (e.g., undergraduate, undergraduate major, graduate, etc.)
  - ✓ Standardized test scores
  - ✓ Research, work, and/or volunteer experience
  - ✓ Reference letters
  - ✓ Personal statement

# Differences in Admissions Criteria

- ▶ Doctoral programs
  - ▶ Interview
  - ▶ Previous research experience
  - ▶ GRE scores
- ▶ Master's programs
  - ▶ Previous psychology coursework
  - ▶ Previous research experience
  - ▶ Interview

# Resources to Help You Be Strategic

- ▶ Advisor/Mentor
- ▶ APA's Graduate Study in Psychology  
<http://gradstudy.apa.org/>
- ▶ PsycINFO/ResearchGate
- ▶ Department Website

# Closing Advice

- ▶ Program reputation means more than school reputation
- ▶ Nothing wrong with waiting
- ▶ GRE scores not necessarily as important as you think
- ▶ Every interaction is an interview

# More Resources from APA

## Frequently Asked Questions About Graduate School

<https://www.apa.org/education/grad/faqs.aspx>

## Psych Learning Curve

<http://psychlearningcurve.org/>

## PSYCAS: The Psychology Centralized Application Service

<https://psycas.liaisoncas.com>

## Graduate Education And Training Calendar

<https://www.apa.org/ed/graduate/events>

# More Webinars about Graduate Study in Psychology

## Finding Fit: Writing Personal Statements

- ❑ November 12<sup>th</sup>, 11 AM Eastern
- ❑ November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2 PM Eastern

## Finding Fit: Understanding the Power of Letters of Recommendation

- ❑ November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1 PM Eastern
- ❑ November 14<sup>th</sup>, 10 AM Eastern



## PSYCAS: Everything You Need to Know

- ❑ November 14<sup>th</sup>, 3 PM Eastern