

**NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

**Applying to Graduate School: Areas of Specialization in Psychology**

The psychology major provides its students with both a liberal arts education and the opportunity to explore specific areas of psychology in which they have special interests. Graduate education is a process of further refinement during which students become increasingly more proficient and knowledgeable in an area of psychological specialization. Following are descriptions of 8 specialty areas in psychology that require graduate education. (See also APA's Careers in Psychology.) Unless otherwise noted, training for these specialty areas is generally obtained in Psychology Departments.

**CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY:** Clinical psychologists assess and treat people with psychological problems. They may act as therapists for people experiencing normal psychological crises (e.g., grief) or for individuals suffering from chronic psychiatric disorders. Some clinical psychologists are generalists who work with a wide variety of populations, while others work with specific groups like children, the elderly, or those with specific disorders (e.g., schizophrenia). They are trained in universities or professional schools of psychology. They may be found working in academic settings, hospitals, community health centers, or private practice. (See also Counseling Psychology.)

**COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY:** Counseling psychologists do many of the same things that clinical psychologists do. However, counseling psychologists tend to focus more on persons with adjustment problems rather than on persons suffering from severe psychological disorders. They may be trained in Psychology Departments or in Schools of Education. Counseling psychologists are employed in academic settings, community mental health centers, and private practice. (See also Clinical Psychology.)

**DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY:** Developmental psychologists study how we develop intellectually, socially, and emotionally over the lifespan. Some focus on just one period of life (e.g., childhood or adolescence). Developmental psychologists usually do research and teach in academic settings, but many act as consultants to day care centers, schools, or social service agencies.

**EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY:** Educational psychologists are concerned with the study of human learning. They attempt to understand the basic aspects of learning and then develop materials and strategies for enhancing the learning process. For example, an educational psychologist might study reading and then develop a new technique for teaching reading. They are typically trained in Schools of Education and employed in academic settings. (See also School Psychology.)

**EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY:** This area includes a diverse group of psychologists who do research in the most basic areas of psychology (e.g., learning, memory, cognition, perception, biopsychology, and language). You will usually need to apply for specific programs e.g., cognition or biopsychology. Most of these psychologists work in academic settings.

**INDUSTRIAL/ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY:** Industrial/organizational psychologists are primarily concerned with the relationships between people and their work environments. They may develop new ways to increase productivity or be involved in personnel selection. They are employed in business, government agencies, and academic settings.

**SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY:** School psychologists are involved in enhancing the development of children in educational settings. They assess children's psycho educational abilities and recommend actions to facilitate student learning. They usually have Master's degrees and work in public school systems. (See also Educational Psychology.) They often act as consultants to parents, teachers, and administrators to optimize the learning environments of specific students.

**SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY:** Social psychologists study how our beliefs, feelings, and behaviors are affected by other persons. Some topics of interest to social psychologists are attitude formation and change, aggression, prejudice, and interpersonal attraction. Most social psychologists work in academic settings, but some work in federal agencies and businesses doing applied research.

For further information on careers in psychology, visit the American Psychological Association's website <http://www.apa.org/students/student1.html>.