

Suggested Timeline for UB Psychology Majors Wanting to Attend Graduate School in Psychology

The timeline is recommended for psychology majors who plan to apply to graduate programs (i.e., Masters, Ph.D.) in psychology or related fields. Starting early during your undergraduate studies—not only regarding getting research experience but also in preparation for the GRE and investigating graduate programs—is key. Strict adherence to this timeline is not a requirement for gaining admission to a graduate program. However, the greater the deviation from this suggested timeline, the more challenging it will be to put together a competitive graduate application.

FRESHMAN YEAR:

- Take PSY 101: Introduction to Psychology.
- Consider looking for research assistant opportunities (see below).

SOPHOMORE YEAR:

- **As Early As Possible:** Get involved in research by looking for research assistant opportunities in the Psychology Department. Investigate Psychology Department faculty members (<http://www.psychology.buffalo.edu/directory/faculty/>) to identify those who are researching topics that you find interesting. If you find a faculty member who is doing work that excites you, read one or two recent publications (look up the faculty member in the PsycINFO database, <http://library.buffalo.edu/libraries/e-resources/DatabasesbyTitle.html>). Then contact the faculty member, expressing your interest, to inquire if there are any open research assistant positions in his/her lab. Many labs have two semester commitments. Students are advised to work in at least one research lab for at least one year. Students are encouraged to investigate working in a second lab if their interests match with another faculty member. Serving as a research assistant may count for 1-8 credits per semester of PSY 498: Undergraduate Research.
 - Importantly, getting involved in research means more than just putting in your research assistant hours and "showing up." Push yourself to be an active participant in lab activities—look for ways to make your mark in the lab and to learn more about the lab's research. You will find that level of participation and commitment will produce many positive outcomes including giving you a greater appreciation for the research you are working on, allowing you to practice working at a level expected of graduate students, and likely resulting in a stronger letter of recommendation from the faculty member.
- **Fall Semester:**
 - Take PSY 207: Psychological Statistics.
 - Work as a research assistant, if possible.
- **Spring Semester:**
 - Take PSY 250: Scientific Inquiry.
 - Work as a research assistant, if possible.
 - Contact faculty regarding research assistant opportunities for the next year.
- **Summer:**
 - Start preparing for the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) General Test (<http://www.ets.org/gre>). A good way to begin is by taking a practice exam so that you will know how to focus your study. Developing a study strategy is important, and this is the time to plan out everything that you need to do to give yourself the best opportunity to score as high as possible when you take the actual

exam in 12-16 months. Most students benefit from studying from a GRE-prep book or online material, whereas others choose to take a GRE-prep course. Regardless of your method, over the next year, make GRE preparation a priority.

- Start investigating psychology careers and psychology graduate programs. There are a number of helpful resources for this. Check the library or bookstores for the American Psychological Association's *Graduate Study in Psychology*, as well as *Getting In: A Step-By-Step Plan for Gaining Admission to Graduate School in Psychology*. See Christa Greenberg, Coordinator of Undergraduate Studies, in Park 283. Be curious! Talk to faculty members during their office hours. Ask faculty what their careers in psychology involve, so that you will have a better understanding of the types of careers may be available to you if you pursue graduate study in psychology.
- Keep in contact with faculty with whom you are working to see if there are any summer research opportunities available.

JUNIOR YEAR:

- Work as a research assistant throughout the year.
- **Fall or Spring Semester:**
 - Take PSY 450: Advanced Research Methods.
 - Contact faculty to discuss the possibility of doing an Honors project. The Honors Program (<http://www.psychology.buffalo.edu/undergraduate/requirements/honors/>) is a year-long program, typically completed during the senior year, in which students carry out an independent research project. Students must secure a faculty member to advise their project. Faculty are most likely to agree to mentor undergraduates who are working in their labs, so contacting the faculty member you are working for is suggested.
 - *Note:* Completing an Honors Project is not a requirement for application to graduate programs in psychology, but it is highly recommended.
 - Apply for admission to UB's chapter of Psi Chi, The International Honors Society in Psychology (<http://www.psychology.buffalo.edu/undergraduate/honor-society/>). To be admitted you must: have completed Introductory Psychology (PSY 101), Psychological Statistics (PSY 207), and Scientific Inquiry (PSY 250); have current status as a Psychology major; and have a psychology GPA of 3.4 or better and a cumulative GPA of 3.1 or better.
 - Investigate any opportunities to attend, or present any research you have done, at university, state, regional, or national conferences.
- **Spring Semester:**
 - Submit an application for the Psychology Honors Program (see above).
- **Summer:**
 - Dedicate yourself to preparation for the GRE. Take practice tests, and devote regular study time (e.g., every day or several days a week) throughout the summer to GRE preparation.
 - Put together a list of the graduate programs to which you will be applying. Applying to programs is costly and time consuming, so be sure to identify those programs that offer the degree and type of training that you are seeking, as well as faculty who have interests that match well with your interests. Sending applications to 15-20 programs is recommended; applying to fewer programs reduces the likelihood of getting admitted to any program. Create a schedule of application deadlines.

- Keep in contact with faculty with whom you are working to see if there are any summer research opportunities available.
- If you are going to be doing an Honors Project, contact your faculty advisor to ask for a list of readings that are relevant to your research topic. Complete those readings, as well as any others that pertain to your topic. Begin organizing your knowledge base and thoughts about your topic area.

SENIOR YEAR:

- Work as a research assistant throughout the year for your Honors Advisor (if applicable) and/or another faculty member.
- Investigate any opportunities to present any research that you have done at university, state, regional, or national conferences.
- **Fall Semester:**
 - Begin the Honors Program (Take PSY 497: The Honors Seminar).
 - **September/October:** Take the GRE.
 - Begin to assemble your application materials (e.g., CV, personal statement, transcript requests). Writing an effective personal statement is challenging but essential for a strong graduate application. Get feedback on drafts of your personal statement from your faculty advisor and/or other faculty members. Revise your statement accordingly.
 - Request letters of recommendation from three faculty members who know both you and your academic work well. Give faculty at least 3-4 weeks prior to your first deadline to prepare a letter for you. Pay close attention to detail in preparing materials (e.g., instructions, forms, mailing labels) for faculty.
 - **November/December:** Carefully put together each application for submission. Completing applications takes a great deal of time. In psychology, there is no universal graduate application; each application is different. Each application should have a personal statement that is tailored to that program/school and to the faculty member(s) with whom you are interested in working. Get started early and pace yourself throughout the application process.
- **Spring Semester:**
 - Take PSY 497: Honors credit, under your faculty advisor's name.
 - Attend any recruitment interviews to which you are invited and interested in attending.
 - If you are accepted to the program of your choice, rejoice! If you are not accepted to any program, discuss your interests and options with faculty.
 - Complete and defend your Honors Project.
 - Graduate!