Overview of the 4+1 Program in Behavioral Health

The 4+1 terminal Master of Science program in Behavioral Health provides qualified students earning a baccalaureate degree in Psychology or related fields (e.g., Public Health and Neuroscience) from Tulane University with graduate training in a specialty area of psychology. Behavioral Health is a broad term generally understood to subsume mental health, substance use disorders, and health related behaviors. Students who pursue the M.S. in Behavioral Health apply to one of two tracks: (1) Applied or (2) General. Students either may pursue the M.S. with an empirical thesis, concentrating in depth on a particular area of Behavioral Health, OR students may pursue the M.S. with a broad training base in Behavioral Health without a thesis. Curricular requirements and admissions criteria are detailed below.

Core Components of Program

The 4+1 M.S. program in Behavioral Health was developed with two goals in mind: (1) To provide students with training in basic areas in Behavioral Health, and (2) To provide students who are new to psychology or who wish to improve on their knowledge of psychology with a more in-depth understanding of the major areas of concentration at the graduate level. By the end of the +1 year, students are expected to develop knowledge and skills relevant to a broad range of topics in Behavioral Health directly relevant to future careers in clinical practice, research, or policy.

All students admitted to the 4+1 M.S. program in Behavioral Health will complete a two-semester Health Psychology course series. The primary purpose of the fall lecture course (PSYC 6700 Health Psychology I) is to provide a broad introduction to the study of health psychology by examining how biological, psychological, and social factors interact with and affect the efforts people make in promoting good health and preventing illness, the treatment people receive for medical problems, how effectively people cope with and reduce stress and pain, and the recovery, rehabilitation, and psychosocial adjustment of patients with serious health problems. The purpose of the spring seminar course (PSYC 6710 Health Psychology II) is to delve more deeply into contemporary topics in health psychology with direct relevance to the priorities outlined in recent healthcare reforms.

In addition, all students will complete two graduate statistics and research methods courses: (1) PSYC 6090 Univariate Statistics I (fall semester), and (2) PSYC 6100 Research Methods in Behavioral Health (spring semester). PSYC 6090 is an introductory graduate-level course in applied statistics designed to prepare students to understand statistical results presented in journal articles and research reports, to select and conduct statistical analyses for methodology courses as well as independent research, to interpret the results of these analyses, and to think critically about the use of statistical analyses in studies reported in the media or in scientific journals. PSYC 6100 is a graduate-level introduction to psychology research methods, with an emphasis on those most relevant to clinical and real-world settings, especially focused on physical or mental health.

Students who pursue the M.S. in Behavioral Health apply to one of two tracks: (1) Applied or (2) General. Both thesis and non-thesis options are possible in the Applied and General Behavioral Health tracks. Please refer to the checklists for additional details regarding the curriculum for the: (a) Applied thesis track, (b) Applied non-thesis track, (c) General thesis track, and (d) General non-thesis track.

Up to six graduate credit hours may count toward both the bachelor’s degree and the master’s degree. Also, up to six additional graduate credit hours taken as an overload during undergraduate study may be applied toward the M.S. degree. It is expected that students will complete some coursework toward the M.S. during their senior year. Note: students admitted to the Applied track are encouraged to take PSYC 7400 Developmental Psychopathology during the spring semester of their senior year. In addition, it is expected that students pursuing the thesis option have conducted empirical research as an undergraduate student.

For advice on senior year courses that are appropriate for 4+1 M.S. applicants, please contact Dr. Julie Alvarez at jalvar@tulane.edu.
Applied Track – Behavioral Health M.S.

The Applied track in Behavioral Health provides students with training in the use of psychological principles and theories from the field of health psychology to overcome problems in real life situations. Specifically, there are three learning objectives for students admitted to the Applied track in Behavioral Health:

1. Students will gain a basic understanding of the scientific knowledge regarding the interplay between psychology and health and illness, including examining (a) psychological factors related to prevention and management of chronic disease, and (b) psychological factors affecting the treatment of health problems;
2. Students will learn about factors related to effective health care delivery and health care systems including the role that psychologists may play in integrated health care; and
3. Students will gain a basic scientific understanding of the major forms of psychopathology and assessment and treatment of the major mental disorders affecting individuals across the lifespan with a focus on youth.

In addition to the core courses discussed in the “Core Components of Program” section, students in the Applied track complete three applied courses: PSYC 7400 Developmental Psychopathology (which may be taken either during the spring semester of the senior year or the spring semester of the +1 year) and either the Assessment course sequence (PSYC 7610 Psychological Assessment I and PSYC 7620 Psychological Assessment II) or the Intervention course sequence (PSYC 7630 Behavioral and Cognitive Behavioral Intervention and PSYC 7660 Evidence-Based Interventions for Children and Adolescents). Only students admitted to the Applied track may take the applied courses (refer to descriptions on page 4). Note: Because the applied courses are capped at a small class size, not all students who apply for admission to the Applied track will be accepted into that track. Some students who apply to the Applied track may be offered admission in the General track. Moreover, students who are admitted to the Applied track may not receive their first choice of the Assessment or Intervention course sequence (which will depend each year on the number of students who are admitted to the Applied track).

The thesis option in the Applied Behavioral Health track requires 24 credit hours plus the thesis. Students electing to pursue the thesis option should have initiated empirical research as an undergraduate student and identified a specific area of research interest. A regular full-time faculty member in Psychology must commit to thesis supervision prior to admission; in some instances, adjunct and research faculty may serve as co-directors.

The non-thesis option in the Applied Behavioral Health track comprises 30 graduate credit hours (as no thesis is required). Note: Students interested in the Applied track must have successfully completed either PSYC 3330 (Abnormal Psychology) or PSYC 3340 (Developmental Psychopathology) prior to applying to the 4+1 Program.

General Track – Behavioral Health M.S.

The Behavioral Health General track is for students who wish to increase their knowledge of psychology in a greater number of domains beyond the Applied Behavioral Health area described above, and students in this track will have the opportunity to tailor their curriculum to meet these needs. Specifically, there are two learning objectives for students admitted to the General track in Behavioral Health:

1. Students will gain a basic understanding of the scientific knowledge regarding the application of psychological theory and concepts to the study of physical health and disease; and
2. Students will have the opportunity to gain basic familiarity with the major concepts and theories in developmental psychology, psychopathology, social psychology, research design and methods, and physiological psychology.

The thesis option in the General Behavioral Health track requires 24 credit hours plus the thesis. Students electing to pursue the thesis option should have initiated empirical research as an undergraduate student and identified a specific area of research interest. A regular full-time faculty member in Psychology must commit to thesis supervision prior to admission; in some instances, adjunct and research faculty may serve as co-directors.

The non-thesis option in the General Behavioral Health track comprises 30 graduate credit hours (as no thesis is required). Note: Students in the General track may take up to 3 credits of independent study (or special topics).
Admissions Information

Criteria for Admission

Note: Applications for the 4+1 program in Behavioral Health are accepted only from students pursuing a baccalaureate degree from Tulane University.

Application Deadline: March 1 of Senior Year

Students at Tulane working toward the baccalaureate degree in Psychology or a related field (e.g., Public Health, Neuroscience) must apply for admission no later than March 1st of their senior year. Note: Students graduating in May should apply by March 1 for fall admission of the same year, whereas students graduating a semester early (i.e., December graduates) should apply by March 1 for spring admission of the following year.

To be competitive for admission, students should meet the following criteria:

- Undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 or higher
- A letter grade of B or higher earned in PSYC 3090 (Univariate Statistics I)
- Successful completion of PSYC 3330 (Abnormal Psychology) or PSYC 3340 (Developmental Psychopathology) prior to applying to the 4+1 Program (for students interested in the Applied Behavioral Health track only)
- GRE scores: Please plan ahead and place the order for your GRE scores to be sent to Tulane at least one month in advance of the application deadline (https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/scores/send/asr) – use school code 6173 for GRE scores. Although GRE scores are encouraged, 4+1 applicants may substitute SAT or ACT scores for GRE scores (Note: If you choose to use your SAT/ACT scores instead of GRE scores, you must grant the Department of Psychology permission – on the 4+1 Supplementary Application Form – to access your SAT/ACT scores from your undergraduate record).
- Two Letters of Recommendation:
  o You must obtain letters of recommendation from TWO full-time faculty members in the Department of Psychology at Tulane University. For applicants to the thesis track, one recommendation MUST contain a graduate faculty member’s commitment to supervise the thesis research (and at least 3 credits of independent empirical research in psychology should have been earned as an undergraduate).
- Baccalaureate degree from Tulane pending successful completion of requirements

Required Application Materials

1. Application for Graduate Study in the School of Science and Engineering: https://applygrad.tulane.edu/apply/
2. 4+1 Supplementary Application Form (pdf) uploaded to the online SSE application under “Optional Document(s)”
3. Current Undergraduate Transcript (a copy of the unofficial audit is acceptable)
4. Two letters of recommendation from full-time faculty members in the Department of Psychology at Tulane
5. Statement of Purpose uploaded to the online SSE application
6. Curriculum Vitae uploaded to the online SSE application under “Optional Document(s)”
7. GRE (or SAT/ACT) scores

Advising

All students admitted to the 4+1 Accelerated M.S. Program in Behavioral Health will be assigned an adviser (either Dr. Julie Alvarez or Dr. Michael Hoerger) to assure that each student’s uniquely tailored curriculum satisfies degree requirements, as well as the student’s own academic goals. The checklists, which highlight the requirements of each track, should be helpful in planning your curriculum with your adviser.
Course Descriptions for the Assessment and Intervention Sequences in the Applied Behavioral Health Track

**Assessment Course Sequence**

**Fall: Psychological Assessment I (PSYC 7610)**
This course is the first in a two-semester sequence covering psychological assessment. Consistent with the view of psychological assessment as a dynamic and inherently therapeutic process, students learn to collect test data that provide an integrated view of a human being, with contextual, developmental and historical data, subjective experiences, presenting concerns, signs and symptoms, observational data, and information provided from multiple informants. Information is integrated to provide an understanding of the person evaluated in order to answer referral questions and develop interventions and/or therapeutic plans. Topics include the history of cognitive assessment, theories of intelligence and current issues affecting the field of cognitive assessment. Instruction includes foundational skills for administration, scoring, and interpretation of commonly used cognitive assessment instruments, interviewing skills, assessment of academic functioning, and report writing. Adherence to standardized test administration, and practice consistent with professional ethical principles and codes of conduct are emphasized throughout the course. In addition, client strengths and needs are embedded in an appreciation of diversity relevant to cognitive assessment and education. Students are taught to use self-reflection to understand their own performance and understand their contributions to the processes of conducting effective evaluations.

**Spring: Psychological Assessment II (PSYC 7620)**
This course is the second in the two-semester sequence covering the basics of psychological assessment of children and youth. This course builds on competencies from 7610 and covers assessment of a range of domains of functioning, including socio-emotional functioning. The focus in this course is on building skills needed to conduct comprehensive school-based evaluations, but content is applicable to assessment of children and youth in clinical settings. Assessment is one of many roles in which psychologists practice as data-based decision makers. Assessment responsibilities demand accountability at a high level of accuracy and competencies need to be highly developed. This course explores the basis of the evaluation process grounded in the ecological developmental perspective, and assumes the evaluation of children and youth yields a “snapshot” of a developing human being. The resulting profile of skills is useful for planning interventions or treatment to promote improved functioning and enhance development.

**Intervention Course Sequence**

**Fall: Behavioral and Cognitive Behavioral Intervention (PSYC 7630)**
This course will provide students with the theoretical and technical foundation necessary to implement behavioral and cognitive behavioral interventions in schools and other settings serving children and adolescents. The course will be equally split between a) behavioral assessment and intervention and b) assessment and intervention in the context of cognitive behavioral therapy. Assessment, case conceptualization, and treatment planning, with attention to treatment fidelity and multicultural competence, will be emphasized throughout. Lastly, students will be expected to critically evaluate behavioral and cognitive behavioral approaches within efficacy, effectiveness, and dissemination and implementation frameworks.

**Spring: Evidence-Based Interventions for Children and Adolescents (PSYC 7660)**
This course will provide students with the theoretical, empirical, and clinical knowledge to conduct Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and other evidence-based treatments in schools and other settings serving children and adolescents with psychological disorders. Case conceptualization and review of the available research of specific manualized therapies will be emphasized. Students will learn to integrate the best available research with clinical knowledge and to consider client characteristics, culture, and preferences when selecting interventions.