

# UIS Career Development Center

## Psychology Grad School Timeline

This timeline serves as a general guideline for ways to prepare for graduate and/or professional school during your undergraduate career. Depending on each person's unique academic and career goals, the order and information of the steps given may vary. For a more comprehensive plan of preparing for graduate and/or professional school, consult a career counselor at the UIS Career Development Center.

### First Year

- ◆ Talk to others, such as other UIS Students, who might be pursuing a psychology related career path. Ask them:
  - What are the general requirements?
  - What are some prerequisite courses?
  - Which professors should you take classes with?
  - Is this program/major a good fit for you?
  - What are some mistakes they made that you can avoid?
- ◆ Start taking general requirements and prerequisites:
  - Meet with an academic advisor and faculty members to arrange a class schedule that will prepare you for higher level classes and graduate school.
- ◆ Start thinking about an undergraduate major:
  - Talk to a Career Counselor at the UIS Career Development Center about the different options to meet your career goals, or just to figure out your career goals!
  - Don't rule out majors other than psychology, as they can be supplemented with elective coursework, but can be more challenging to accomplish.
- ◆ Begin volunteering and/or looking for a part-time job or internship where you can learn valuable skills to benefit your psychology profession. Getting a better sense of the field and networking to build new relationships is essential to a successful career!
  - This will allow you to get your foot in the door with different organizations.
  - Maintain a strong professional relationship with people who could write you recommendation letters and serve as references.
  - Working with professionals in this field will allow you to learn some of their personal experiences in the field. They can also inform you on grad school options and answer questions that you may have.
  - Even if you do not get a job or opportunity you apply for, keep in contact with the people. You never know when something may arise!
  - Conduct informational interviews with professionals in the field to gain their insight and advice on the psychology field!
  - Throughout your undergraduate career, it is important to network not only with others in your classes, but professors and other professionals in the field. Join student clubs and community organizations whenever you can to gain valuable connections and experience! Also, consider memberships to organizations as most have student discounts!

## **Second Year**

- ◆ After you have chosen psychology as your undergraduate major, declare it in writing and fill out all necessary paper work. Follow up on it to make sure everything has been processed.
- ◆ Pick a concentration and continue to take the general education classes as well as some of the core classes in psychology.
- ◆ Continue to take the general education classes as well as some of the introductory classes for the major.
- ◆ With your career counselor, consider what areas of psychology you may want to pursue (i.e. research, clinical, animal, etc.)
- ◆ When considering different options for graduate school, also think about online degree options and programs that allow you to earn a Master's degree while pursuing your Doctorate. Do not rule out certificate programs as well, as these can serve for specialty areas within your career field. Be sure to consider all of your possibilities with your career counselor!
- ◆ Consider different graduate degrees at the schools you are interested in. Consult your career counselor for assistance in choosing a graduate degree and to research the outlook of that degree and career field.
- ◆ At the end of your sophomore year find the academic advisor specific to the psychology department. To do this talk with professors, your current advisor, or Upperclassmen. Once you have found your advisor begin planning your schedule for your first semester of junior year.
- ◆ Throughout your whole undergraduate career, stay up to date on psychology news and current events, when time permits. The more knowledgeable you can be about your specialty and career field, the better!
- ◆ Start paying attention to different issues in your field, such as Public Health issues, ethics, patient confidentiality, and legal issues.

## **Third Year**

- ◆ Meet with your psychology advisor to make sure that you are on the right track for the following semester, regarding your coursework.
- ◆ Ask the Psychology Department or inquire within the community for a research assistant position.
- ◆ If a Senior Honors Research Project is required discuss ideas with your advisor to ensure that you are prepared for the future.
- ◆ Start looking into grad school options, especially the application. Applications will need to be sent out first semester of your senior year.
- ◆ You will also need to take the GRE (Graduate Record Examination). Come to the Career Development Center and find all the resources you need, such as ways to register, testing dates, locations, and all other necessary information.
- ◆ It is beneficial to take the GRE in either spring of your junior year or the summer going into senior year. This way if you are not satisfied with your score, you can retake the test.
  - To prepare for this test you can use many resources such as, books, online courses, and programs offered by the Career Development Center.

- ◆ If you are choosing to take your Psychology Degree into a medical field or a law career you will want to take the MCAT (Medical College Admissions Test) or LSAT (Law School Admissions Test).
  - To prepare for these tests you can use many resources such as, books, online courses, and programs offered at your school, such as the programs put on by the Career Development Center.

### **Summer after Third Year**

- ◆ Think about those applications!
  - Start gathering information needed for your applications.
  - Make sure you get organized so that you complete all applications on time!
  - A chart of all the schools and information usually works well in addition to check lists.
- ◆ If you are waiting to take the entrance exams in the beginning of your senior year use the summer to prepare!
- ◆ Continue with your summer internships, research, and jobs!! Not only will you learn beneficial information, gain experiences, and continue networking, but you also can save money for those expensive applications and tests!

### **Fourth Year**

#### **First Semester:**

- ◆ Meet with your advisor to make sure that you are on the right track to graduation and have fulfilled all necessary requirements for all certifications.
- ◆ If you have not already done so take the GRE, or other exam depending on your career path.
- ◆ Contact faculty members and other professionals to ask if they are willing to write recommendations.
- ◆ Begin working on your vitae or resume and stop by the Career Development Center to have it critiqued!
- ◆ Begin working on a draft of your personal statement of academic and professional goals. Need help? Come to the Career Development Center and get one-on-one advice! Also, share your personal statement with professors to get their input.
- ◆ Offer recommendation forms to the faculty members; remember to include the addressed and stamped envelopes as well, always following the exact instructions of the university you are applying to.

#### **Second Semester:**

- ◆ Complete all applications with January deadlines in December and request for transcripts to be sent out.
- ◆ From January to April, contact the department you applied to and be sure they have received all paperwork and test scores.
- ◆ Schedule and prepare for interviews. Come to the Career Development Center and do a mock interview. There are numerous resources available to take advantage of!
- ◆ Once you have heard from schools and evaluated all options, notify the school you will be attending, and let other schools know that you are declining your acceptance.

## **Resources**

American Psychological Association

<http://www.apa.org/>

Association for Psychological Science

<http://www.psychologicalscience.org/>

Encyclopedia of Psychology

[http://www.psychology.org/links/Resources/Doing\\_Research/](http://www.psychology.org/links/Resources/Doing_Research/)

GradSchools.com

<http://www.gradschools.com/FieldofStudy/Psychology/22.html>

Graduate Record Examination (GRE)

<http://www.ets.org/gre/>

Law School Admissions Test (LSAT)

<http://www.lsac.org/LSAT/about-the-lsat.asp>

Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT)

<http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/>

Psychology in the News

<http://psycport.apa.org/>

So, You Want to Go to Grad School in Psychology

[http://www.psychology.uwaterloo.ca/gradprog/preparation/grad\\_school\\_in\\_psych.html](http://www.psychology.uwaterloo.ca/gradprog/preparation/grad_school_in_psych.html)

Society of Clinical Psychology

<http://www.apa.org/divisions/div12/homepage.html>

Student Doctor Network

<http://www.studentdoctor.net/>