# Clinical Psychology Student Handbook

# University of Connecticut

2023-2024

Welcome to the Graduate Program in Clinical Psychology at the University of Connecticut. Your arrival here today marks the beginning of a journey toward the development of specialized competencies as a clinical psychologist. This journey involves not only the acquisition of expert knowledge, but also alterations in your thinking about yourself, your actions, and your place in the world. You will find this trek to be alternatively exhausting and exhilarating; tortuous and thrilling. You will find the faculty and the more advanced students ready to provide compassionate and wise assistance as you make this transition to professional interdependence.

This handbook is designed to facilitate your progress through the Program. It is a mixture of official policies, recommendations for making your life easier, and the accumulated wisdom of your peers and faculty mentors. The handbook supplements (but does not replace) other important published material that appears in the current editions of the [Graduate School Catalog](https://gradcatalog.uconn.edu/), [Policies and Rules for Graduate Study in Psychological Sciences](https://psychology.uconn.edu/graduate/policies-guidelines-resources/), and the Policies and Procedures Manual of the Psychological Services Clinic. In this handbook, we periodically reference relevant portions of these sources, but you should become familiar with them to facilitate your progress through the Program.

The policies and recommendations contained in the above-named documents and this handbook are considered to be in effect at the time you start the Program. With the [Graduate School Catalog](https://gradcatalog.uconn.edu/), we urge you to become familiar with all current degree requirements as well as with revisions of those policies. One of your first tasks as a graduate student is to review the contents of this handbook.

## Being a Student in This Clinical Psychology Program

The traditional academic advising arrangement in most departments of higher education has its roots in a medieval university structure that was based on an apprentice model. Within this traditional arrangement, students were selected by individual faculty who had total authority to guide (and to evaluate) the educational activities (and products) of their charges. The remnants of this system may be found in our admissions procedures and in the advising committee structure that exists within this and other graduate departments, as described in the [Graduate School Catalog](http://gradcatalog.uconn.edu/) and the [Policies and Rules for Graduate Study in Psychological Sciences](https://psychology.uconn.edu/graduate/policies-guidelines-resources/).

Over time, and in particular disciplines, individual faculty relinquished some of their autonomy to develop programs of study, or more standardized sequences of activities (e.g., courses, evaluative procedures, etc.). In making these covenants, faculty members agree to follow common collective procedures and expect that their students will do the same. Decisions about procedures and policies as well as evaluation and dispositions about students rest with Program faculty as a whole. Program directors are faculty peers who are selected to administer policies and to execute specific actions as determined by the faculty and program, department, and university guidelines.

As a result of these decisions, this Program functions as a community; an aggregation of people who agree to abide by certain rules and to comport themselves in specific ways. The community is more than the sum of its individual members; it has a history and an ethos. For example, one strong historical ethic within the Program is that “good mentoring will produce good mentors.” This orientation can be discerned in the atmosphere of respect and cooperation that is evident among faculty and the mutually caring interactions that exist between faculty and students. It is reflected in the careful preparation that faculty bring to their teaching and research activities, efforts to ensure parity of financial support resources for students within class years, the expectation of the faculty that, in future years, you will involve yourself in helping less advanced students, and in numerous other ways

**Being a member of this Program means that your actions (and ours) have potential consequences that extend beyond each individual’s personal decisions.** At the bottom line, what you do, and how you do it, has implications for our relationships with other programs within the Department, members of the local community, psychologists at affiliated institutions (e.g., clerkship sites, internship sites), and other allied health professionals. These groups may represent rapidly changing populations (e.g., undergraduate students that you teach) or constituencies with which we have long- standing relationships (e.g., the professional associations of which we are members). The many manifestations and nuances of being a member of this community will evolve as you progress through the Program. Some more obvious examples will appear in later portions of this manual.

At the beginning, however, you should at all times consider the possible impact of your actions upon those of us with whom you are connected. **At the foundation of our work together, the faculty assumes that you will exercise good judgment regarding your conduct; good judgment is not something that we should have to teach explicitly and would prefer to leave to your individual discretion.** We ask that you engage in thoughtful reflection about the consequences of your actions (e.g. mode of dress, extra-curricular activities, social networking choices, professional undertakings, etc.) and consultation with your advisors, as necessary. Thoughtful reflection about your activities is an important goal, not only in professional situations, but also in contexts where you will be observed and evaluated by members of the public.

## The Program as a Scientist-Practitioner Community

Our Program represents a small community of faculty and students who have voluntarily relinquished some of their autonomy in order to pursue shared ideals. This community is embedded within larger constituencies, such as the Department of Psychological Sciences, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the University of Connecticut, and surrounding communities. Our learning community has several rich and long-standing traditions, all of which have been aimed at creating an intentional learning climate that will promote the maximal development of your personal and professional talents and potential. Some of our more salient traditions are:

1. Faculty and students embrace the [Ethical Principles of Psychologists](https://www.apa.org/ethics/code/) (American Psychological Association, 2003, 2010, 2017) in our professional activities. We use the ideals and standards embodied in this document as a means of guiding our interactions and working out differences. All faculty are extremely well versed in the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct. A copy of this document is included in your orientation materials. You also can find the older version of the Ethical Principles in the American Psychologist, 1992, 47, 1597-1611 and the 2003 update in the American Psychologist, 2002, 57, 1060-1074 or via the [APA website](http://www.apa.org/ethics). **You should become familiar with the Ethical Principles and use the code to guide your professional endeavors.**
2. Faculty treat one another and students in a dignified, collegial manner that respects our commonalities, our diversities and our uniqueness. We do our best to be fair and impartial in evaluating one another and in our efforts to allocate resources (including financial aid). The Program does not discriminate against students on any basis and encourages diversity in ethnicity, race, gender, physical challenge, and sexual and gender identity. We endeavor to engage in ongoing reflection about our own biases in an effort to limit their expression. **We expect that you will honor the diversity you experience while here and that you will refrain from any activities that suggest hostility toward or harassment of others on the basis of sexuality, sexual identity, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, political ideology, physical abilities, or psychological infirmity.**
3. The Clinical Program is firmly committed to the integration of science and practice. Our program centers on a commitment to scholarship and empirical inquiry and emphasizes the significant role played by theoretical and empirical knowledge in understanding complex human behavior. The faculty share the belief that scientific methodology represents the essential underpinnings of all activities engaged in by professional practitioners. The integration of science and practice includes the recognition that the “lived experiences” of clients, research participants, researchers, and practitioners, as well as the contextual demands and social conditions of those experiences both inform and are informed by the same scientific principles. We believe the special value of training that integrates science and practice is that our students are able to use their clinical sensitivity and skills in research, clinical, administrative, teaching, and supervisory positions, and also to critically and thoughtfully evaluate their professional efforts through methods of empirical inquiry and self-reflection.
4. Governance of the Program is shared between faculty and students. Although the faculty remain ultimately responsible for all aspects of Program functioning, student input is continually sought about most decisions, except those that involve personnel issues. The Program Head and the Director of Clinical Training meet regularly with each of the classes. Students complete an annual survey about their training experience and the results of that are discussed in an all program meeting each spring. Those discussions have led to significant modifications in the program. The Director of Clinical Training is responsible for implementing policies set by the faculty in response to changing needs and student feedback.
5. Faculty attempt to deal with problems that students may manifest, with compassion and fairness. We expect that you will make mistakes and we are inclined to view these as learning experiences, unless we come to believe that other dynamics are at work. We expect you to be honest with us in sharing personal information that affects your professional performance. We expect that you will learn from your mistakes and not repeat them.
6. Faculty consult actively with one another about making professional commitments. Both faculty and students are encouraged to take appropriate risks in developing new professional skills, with the consultation of our peers and experienced mentors. We negotiate our commitments with one another and we continually renegotiate them as we face changing life circumstances. We avoid being avoidant or “hiding out” and we expect that you will do the same.
7. We tend to maintain welcoming contacts with our students long after they have completed the Program. We encourage you to stay in touch with us, to share successes, life obstacles, and your perceptions about the quality of your graduate training. As part of our accreditation process, we are expected to provide certain information about graduates of our program (such as licensure status, professional accomplishments) and to periodically conduct surveys of former students. We welcome feedback from you so that we can continually evaluate and improve our program.

## Program Structure and Your Tasks

The Clinical Program enrolls 6-8 students each year with 35-50 students in residence annually. Of the [eight concentrations in the Department](https://psychology.uconn.edu/phd/#concentrations), the Clinical Psychology Program trains the largest number of doctoral students, comprising 30-35% of the department’s graduate students. The Program requires a minimum of 3 years full-time graduate study and a year-long internship (or an equivalent two-year, halftime sequence) prior to awarding the doctoral degree. At least two of the three years of full-time graduate study must occur at the University of Connecticut. Students must attain a grade of B- or above in all required courses and must attain appropriate competency ratings in all clinical placements. Students must complete a research M.S. thesis or its equivalent, a research doctoral dissertation or a three-paper thesis and a written general examination. Students who enter the Program with a master’s that did not require a research thesis will be expected to meet an equivalent research requirement.

### The faculty utilize student feedback and continually review course offerings and evaluative operations and make modifications in order to keep our training abreast of changes within the field. This section provides an overview of required courses and summarizes aspects of program processes.

### Certification as a Basis for Curricular Requirements

Professionals commonly are accorded a great deal of autonomy and freedom by the larger society. Professionals, in turn, also tacitly agree to take on particular responsibilities and obligations that are not expected of non-professionals. One major hallmark of being a professional is being able to demonstrate that you possess specialized knowledge and competencies. The acquisition of such expertise is certified through two interlocking processes – accreditation and licensure. **Accreditation** is a voluntary process in which **educational institutions** demonstrate that they meet particular standards that the dominant professional association deems necessary to ensure a high quality of professional training. **Licensure** refers to credentialing by state boards of **individuals** who have met specialized educational requirements.

The Program has been continuously accredited since 1951 by the [American Psychological Association](http://750%20First%20St.%20NE,%20Washington,%20DC%2020002-4242;%20(202)%20336-5979;%20apaaccred@apa.org) [750 First St. NE, Washington, DC 20002-4242; (202) 336-5979; apaaccred@apa.org] and was recently awarded a 10-year accreditation. Being accredited means that our Program must meet multiple criteria, some of which include having a coherent model of professional training, a coherent and graduated curriculum that provides clear instruction in discipline specific content and the development of profession wide competencies, a clearly identifiable core faculty, clear lines of leadership and accountability, adequate space and resources, respectful interpersonal relationships, and training experiences that recognize human commonalities and diversity. As part of maintaining our accreditation, the faculty and student representatives must provide an annual report to the American Psychological Association and, every 5-10 years, must conduct a thorough program review, which is followed by a site visit by psychologists from other universities. Our annual reports are prepared in August of each year by the Director of Clinical Training and submitted to the American Psychological Association. Accredited programs agree to cover certain topical areas in their curricula. These areas change over time. It is our obligation to ensure that we offer courses in areas that are required by the accrediting body. **It is your responsibility to ensure that you avail yourself of what we are obligated to offer.**

While accreditation deals with the relationship between educational institutions and professional associations, licensure involves a relationship between individual professionals and state regulatory boards. Licenses are granted by each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and by all Canadian provinces to individuals who have met stringent educational requirements. A license permits those holding the license to perform certain activities (e.g., practice medicine, law, psychology, etc.) and also reserves use of the term (e.g., physician, psychologist) exclusively to the holders. In Connecticut, licensed psychologists enjoy certain privileges (e.g., privileged communication about client disclosures, the right to have potentially dangerous individuals detained by the police, etc.) and only individuals holding licenses as psychologists can call themselves “psychologists”. Although there is some consistency across states regarding licensure, there are state-specific requirements. In accordance with the Higher Education Act, UConn hereby discloses that the curriculum for this program meets the state educational requirements for licensure as a Psychologist for the State of Connecticut. UConn has not determined whether the curriculum for this program meets the educational requirements for licensure as a Psychologist in any other states or territories. We encourage you to investigate the requirements in the states or territories where you may be interested in licensure. **Links to individual state licensing requirements can be found on the** [**Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards website**](https://www.asppb.net/page/BdContactNewPG)**.**

### Program Philosophy and Goals

The Program aims to establish basic competence in academic, research, and clinical pursuits, with your individual interests being critical determinants of your own future professional development. The curriculum is organized to provide a thorough grounding in major methods of empirical inquiry. The scientific method is considered the cornerstone upon which clinical knowledge is advanced and clinical skills are developed. The Program attempts to stimulate interest in research related to complex clinical and social problems and to teach contemporary clinical skills within contexts of relevant theory and empirical data.

The mission of the Program is to train you to use psychological theory and methods of empirical inquiry with sophistication. Upon graduation, we expect that you will demonstrate:

1. a thorough understanding of the knowledge base in clinical psychology and an appreciation of current issues in the field;
2. the ability to generate independent research, evaluate and critique empirical work and contribute to the empirical literature relevant to the content and practice of Psychology
3. the ability to use a variety of empirically supported techniques in the areas of assessment and intervention and to assess the efficacy of those efforts
4. the ability to create and implement innovative psychological strategies and procedures that will help to promote human welfare, and evaluate the efficacy of those strategies
5. a recognition of the interdependence of science and practice and an ability to integrate the two perspectives
6. an understanding and appreciation of cultural and individual diversity and the ability to approach clinical work, research and training from a stance of cultural humility; and
7. the ability to hold self-critical and self-corrective attitudes informed by ethical principles and professional standards toward all of your scientific and clinical endeavors.

The course sequence integrates theory, research, and practical clinical skills beginning in the first semester and permits maximum flexibility for you to pursue specialized areas of interest within the constraints of (a) fulfilling requirements set by the American Psychological Association as part of its accreditation, (b) providing exposure to multiple aspects of diversity, and (c) ensuring that every student obtains enough clinical experiences to be competitive for internships. Most internship sites require a minimum of 700 clinical hours; many of our students, especially those who complete the neuropsychology concentration, accrue more than 1,000 hours.

The present curriculum is consistent with the discipline specific knowledge and profession wide competencies outlined by the American Psychological Association, Committee on Accreditation.

## Getting Organized and Staying Informed

Prior to beginning your classes, you will receive a detailed orientation to the Program and to the Department. You will learn how to register for your courses, who to see for keys and emotional support, where you can find [(arguably) the best pizza](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_Pepe_Pizzeria_Napoletana), how to teach the basic psychology labs, and a mind-numbing amount of other information, including this manual. Here, we include a few reminders about how to get started in an organized way.

1. Review the [Information Technology Services (ITS) new student webpage](https://its.uconn.edu/new-to-uconn-students/) for information on technology resources available to students, including email and the Student Administration System. For assistance with account set-up or access contact the [ITS Technology Support Center](https://techsupport.uconn.edu/%29.).
2. Check your UConn email and mail frequently. UConn uses your university email account to send all official notices. Students also have a mailbox in the Graduate Student Lounge (BOUS 187) where you may receive notices, memos, and other University and Department communications.
3. Attend the [Institute for Teaching and Learning Graduate Assistant Orientation](https://cetl.uconn.edu/programs-and-events/new-ta-orientation-programs-and-services/), the Clinical Psychology program New Student Orientation meeting (typically the Thursday before classes begin) and the Psychological Sciences Department Orientation & Graduate Student Meeting (typically the Friday before classes begin). It is also recommended that you attend [Graduate School orientation sessions](https://grad.uconn.edu/incoming-students/orientation/), typically held the week prior to the start of classes.
4. Ask questions until you get answers that satisfy and make sense to you. We believe that the only “stupid” questions are the ones that remain unasked.

## Your Tasks During the First Year

During your first year, you need to focus on four major tasks.

* First, you need to demonstrate that you possess the personal stability, interpersonal sensitivity, time management skills and good judgment that are necessary prerequisites for functioning as a professional psychologist. These qualities are inferred from your clinical work observing in the clinic and in the psychological assessment course, your interactions with faculty and staff, how you appear to get along with your peers and how well you manage the multiple responsibilities that are part of graduate training.
* Second, you need to begin honing your skills in psychological assessment.
* Third, you should actively engage your major advisor to help guide you through the tasks associated with defining and executing your master’s thesis.
* Fourth, you need to complete the required academic course sequence. An overview of the typical course sequence is provided in Appendix A. You will attend vertical team meetings and also register as an observer on a vertical team (V-Team) in the Fall semester of your first year. The Program Requirements Checklist (Appendix B) provides information regarding APA distribution requirements and departmental breadth requirements. This form is used to keep track of your progress. You will be checking off portions of the checklist each semester in consultation with your advisor.

**It is also important to begin saving information about your education. In particular, you should plan to save course syllabi and reading lists. Also, begin recording your clinical activities, such as what tests you administer and score.** Licensing boards sometimes use syllabi and reading lists to determine whether certain courses meet particular requirements. In addition, every internship site will want detailed information about your clinical activities (e.g., how many completed personality batteries administered, how many hours of direct psychotherapeutic contact with adults, children, etc.). In your first year, you will engage in clinical tasks such as clinical observation, assessments, and clinical interviews. You will be asked to [register with Time2Track](https://time2track.com/%29) to your clinical hours and activities. This program will provide the Training Director with a record of your clinical activities each year and will be used as the basis for determining your readiness for internship and preparing your internship application.

During your first year, you will complete two courses in research design and statistical analysis, and courses in developmental psychopathology, adult psychopathology, personality theory, and empirically supported treatment (a didactic psychotherapy course that combines exposure to empirically supported treatment approaches with demonstrations and practical experiences). These didactic courses are complemented by a year-long sequence that provides supervised experience in clinical interviewing, intellectual assessment (first semester, first year), and personality assessment (second semester, first year). As soon as you demonstrate mastery of basic skills, you will administer, score and interpret intellectual and personality tests on varied populations of children and adults in the Psychological Services Clinic (PSC). A copy of the Assessment Competency Benchmarks is included in Appendix C. In addition, in the fall semester you will be assigned to “vertical clinical teams” (called “V-teams”) in which you will observe the psychotherapeutic activities of more advanced students. Finally, in years 1-3, you will be required to attend a weekly Research Seminar in Clinical Psychology (aka Brownbag) each Wednesday. In your second and third years, you will be expected to present your own ideas once yearly. These presentations need not be the final product of a research plan; instead, they are an opportunity for you to present your developing ideas to your peers and receive feedback. The Graduate School requires that you register for 9 credits of GRAD 5950 (Master’s Thesis Research) to document the research you conduct for your Master’s thesis and at least 15 credits of GRAD 6950 (Doctoral Dissertation Research) to document your dissertation research. It is recommended that you register for 3 credits of GRAD 5950 during each of your first 3 semesters and then 3 credits of GRAD 6950 each semester until you have completed at least the required 15 credits.

Many of the required courses during your first and second years provide the discipline- specific knowledge required by APA accreditation. The affective bases of behavior are covered in PSYC 5305 and PSYC 5141; the biological and cognitive bases of behavior are covered in PSYC 5141; material related to the developmental basis of behavior is covered in PSYC 5302, PSYC 5303 and PSYC 5305. Students who have completed a survey course in Social Psychology at the undergraduate level and earned a grade of B or above, or who have attained a score above the 70th percentile on the Social Psychology section of the Psychology GRE, may select from a variety of specialized Social Psychology courses to meet the social basis of behavior requirement. These include PSYC 5711 Social and Behavioral Processes of HIV/AIDS, PSYC 5750 Stigma: A Social Psychological Perspective, and others. Students who do not meet those requirements are required to take PSYC 5703 Advanced Social Psychology.

## Your Tasks During the Second Year

During your second year, you should be attending to five tasks.

* First, you will be taking additional courses that integrate the empirical literature with practical experiences.
* A second goal is to complete your master’s degree.
* Third, you need to begin preparing to take your General Examination (more about this later).
* A fourth “task” has a more phenomenological focus, which centers on beginning to integrate the knowledge that you have absorbed in the classroom with the practical experiences of helping distressed others within psychotherapeutic relationships.
* Finally, you should be making decisions about whether to pursue specialized training offered in the program. We offer two areas of concentration within the division: Neuropsychology and Child Clinical Psychology. These are areas of concentration and not specialized tracks. To complete these areas of concentration, students must complete the general program requirements as well as additional courses and possibly practicum experiences. The Department of Psychological Sciences offers multiple [Graduate Certificate Programs](https://psychology.uconn.edu/graduate/certificate-programs/), including Health Psychology; Quantitative Research Methods; Occupational Health Psychology; Cognitive Science; and Neurobiology of Language. Certificate programs offered by other departments that are often of interest to our students include Culture, Health and Human Development and Race, Ethnicity and Politics. Certificate Programs are formal programs offered by the University; interested students must submit an [application to the Graduate School](https://grad.uconn.edu/admissions/apply-to-uconn/) to be admitted to a Certificate program and related paperwork to the [Registrar’s office](https://registrar.uconn.edu/graduation/graduate-programs/) to complete the program and receive the Certificate. Many students are able to complete one or more areas of concentration or certificate programs without adding additional time to their training. An updated list of all the certificates offered by the University can be found on the [Graduate Catalog website](https://gradcatalog.uconn.edu/certificates/).

Other required courses during the second year include Professional Issues in Clinical Psychology (covering relationships between law, ethics, and psychological practices, and an introduction to clinical supervision and consultation) and Psychology of Ethnic Minorities (a course that examines processes of prejudice, discrimination, identity development, and majority privilege). Foundations of Neuropsychology is required of all clinical students and fulfills APA Requirements in the Biological Basis of Behavior and in Advanced Integrative Areas (see Appendix B) and a Departmental Breadth Requirement. It is also a prerequisite for many advanced courses in neuropsychology, including Neuropsychological Assessment. In addition, courses relevant to individualized interests are offered, such as Methods of Child and Family Therapy (a didactic course that provides exposure and training in various child and family interventions), and Health Psychology (a didactic course on theories and interventions of behavioral health).

You also should complete additional distribution requirements, in non-clinical areas, such as the social basis of behavior. Finally, you should register for the last 3 credits of GRAD 5950 research during the Fall semester of your 2nd year and the first 3 credits of GRAD 6950 research during the Spring semester.

### Research Training

The Department of Psychological Sciences Graduate Program Office, the Graduate School, and the Registrar’s Office provide detailed information about the university requirements, procedures, and format for master’s theses and dissertations (see links below for detailed information). Students must follow all university and departmental procedures and requirements. The information here provides supplementary information about the purpose, program-specific requirements, and timeline for the master’s thesis and dissertation document for students in the Clinical Psychology Program.

* [Department Procedures and Forms for Master's and Ph.D. Students](https://psychology.uconn.edu/graduate/forms/)
* [Registrar's Office - Steps to a Successful Graduation - Master's Degree](https://registrar.uconn.edu/graduation/masters-degrees/)
* [Registrar’s Office – Steps to a Successful Graduation – Doctoral Degree](https://registrar.uconn.edu/graduation/doctoral-degrees/)
* [Graduate School – Forms for Prospective and Enrolled Students](https://grad.uconn.edu/forms/)

The master’s thesis and dissertation are meant to help students develop competence as psychological scientists. The written documents and oral defenses provide evidence that the student has developed competence in three main areas:

1. **The ability to critically evaluate theory and empirical studies related to a specific topic.** Specifically, the student can:
	1. Conduct a literature review that is comprehensive and without bias (e.g., engaging fully with findings that both strengthen and weaken hypotheses)
	2. Acquire in-depth, advanced knowledge of a specific topic
	3. Integrate theory and empirical findings to generate predictions or research hypotheses
2. **The ability to formulate and conduct a research study.** Specifically, the student can:
	1. Conceptualize an empirical study that uses measurable evidence to test meaningful specific hypotheses or explore logical research questions
	2. Choose a research design that can address the research questions and is feasible given time and resource constraints
	3. Conduct analyses that are appropriate to the data and address study hypotheses or research questions
	4. Interpret statistical results in relation to study hypotheses or research questions
3. **The ability to communicate scientific information effectively.** Specifically, the student can:
	1. Write in a clear and concise manner, using APA style
	2. Discuss interpretations and implications of study results in oral and written formats
	3. Reach and defend conclusions in oral and written formats

The format and approach to the master’s thesis and dissertation will vary based on research areas and labs; however, all students must show appropriate progress towards the above competencies. In addition, the following requirements apply to all students:

1. **Empirical work.** At least one project must involve active data collection by the student. This can be accomplished through independent data collection (e.g., with the participant pool, [UConn KIDS,](https://kids.uconn.edu/) online sources such as [Prolific](https://www.prolific.co/), etc.) or by involvement in ongoing data collection in the advisor’s lab. In other words, the master’s and dissertation projects cannot both utilize strictly secondary data analysis.
2. **Novel idea development.** At least one project must include efforts to address novel study questions or hypotheses. While replication studies of previous work are valuable, students must develop the study hypotheses or research questions for either the master’s or dissertation projects.
3. **Independent thinking.** While projects can “piggyback” on large, ongoing studies, the student must be responsible for independently generating hypotheses.

### Master’s Timelines

The information below provides guidance and clarification about timelines for the master’s thesis. Although these timelines may need to change for an individual because of extenuating circumstances, these should be regarded as general program expectations. The goal should be to complete your master’s degree by end of summer of the second year; however, there are no formal “consequences” until the 3rd year in the program. These consequences include:

#### Program consequences

* You cannot start interviewing for clerkship until your master’s degree has been awarded. Practically, 3rd year students start interviewing for clerkship in late December (at the earliest) through March/April. This means that if you have not completed your master’s by the end of Fall semester of your third year, it will likely impact your clerkship options.
* No student can be considered for a PSC student supervisor position if their masters is not complete.

#### University consequences

* You cannot be an Instructor of Record (teach an undergraduate course independently) until your master’s degree has been awarded. Although this has been a university policy for several years, it has not been consistently enforced. As of 2019-2020 the department is enforcing it. Most students do not teach independently until the 4th or 5th year.
* The university maximum for completing the masters is 6 years. Students are not allowed to continue at UConn if they exceed this timeline.

### There are many facets to completing your master’s degree, including forming a master’s advising committee (your advisor, one other member from the Clinical Program, and one faculty member from outside of the Clinical Program), obtaining University Institutional Review Board approval and collecting and analyzing your data. These steps will vary dependent upon your specific project. While the program, department and university have certain timeline requirements, you should work with your major advisor to develop an individualized timeline. The master’s thesis is typically about the length and scope of a journal manuscript. A copy of the Master’s Plan of Study is located in Appendix D.

### Beginning Your Clinical Training

Your first experience as a psychotherapist begins via involvement in a year-long psychotherapy practicum in either Adult Psychotherapy or Child Psychotherapy. Both practica draw their clients from referrals made to the Psychological Services Clinic (PSC). The PSC provides psychotherapy services, evaluations, assessments, and consultations to the local community as well as the university community. In keeping with the demographic profile of the area, PSC clients include relatively small numbers of minority clients; in 2022-2023, 36% of therapy clients were racial or ethnic minorities and 18% self-identified as sexual minorities. 90% of the Clinic’s clients receive services at markedly reduced fees. Students are expected to continue work with clients through June and July; the Clinic closes for the month of August.

Therapy training in the PSC is organized in a vertical team model. Second and third-year practicum students carry caseloads of 3-4 clients and receive intensive supervision following live and videotaped observation of sessions. Fifth year students serve as student supervisors and work under the supervision of faculty members who head the vertical teams. First year students attend vertical teams as observers and complete initial observations of therapy sessions. The teams intentionally represent a range of empirically supported theoretical perspectives including cognitive behavioral, interpersonal, and family systems approaches. All teams incorporate evidence-based approaches and ongoing assessment of the efficacy of treatment efforts, with the goal of enabling students to select and synthesize the most appropriate approaches for each client. Vertical teams are supervised by seven licensed psychologists: five members of the Clinical Faculty, and two licensed practitioners from the local community who are adjunct faculty members in the Department of Psychological Sciences.

All students are required to complete the Adult Psychotherapy Practicum but can choose to do so in either their second or third year. **The Child Practicum is optional but strongly recommended.** Many of our students who do not plan to specialize in the treatment of children and families have found the Child Practicum to be a rewarding and enlightening training experience. Students can take the Child Practicum in either the second or third year. Thus, by the end of the third year, each student will have completed two year-long practica: either a year of child and a year of adult or two years of adult. Students receive feedback from their faculty supervisors at the end of each semester. The Vertical Team Evaluation Form is included in Appendix E.

In March 2020 the Clinic began providing telehealth services to all clients due to the COVID 19 pandemic. We continued to provide therapy services remotely, with live supervision via video platforms, and hybrid assessment services throughout the 21-22 academic year. We returned to largely in-person services in the fall of 2022 although we will continue to provide telehealth services as needed by some clients. All telehealth services must be provided by students from the Clinic, instead of from remote locations. In accord with University policy, all students are encouraged to monitor their health and to avoid coming into the Clinic when they are ill.

This experience as a professional helper can be stressful. One student described a sense of panic at “the sudden realization that I had to be able to call on all the material I was supposed to have been learning in class to make a difference in the life of another person who needs my help”. It is normal, and even useful, to experience that kind of transient stress as a beginning therapist. It is during this initial year as a therapist that students often choose to enter psychotherapy themselves (more about that later).

## Your Tasks During the Third Year

The summer prior to your third year should see you completing and passing your General Examination that qualifies you officially for doctoral study (i.e., dissertator). Passing some sort of comprehensive General Examination is a requirement of the Graduate School, but the format of the exam is left to the discretion of individual graduate programs. In the Clinical Program, the examination is a review paper designed to engage students in critical thinking skills and to demonstrate the ability to navigate, integrate and articulate a complex array of theories, empirical research, and professional obligations into a well-written product. A copy of the General Exam requirements is located in Appendix F; a copy of the Registrar’s Report on the General Examination for the Doctoral Degree form is included as Appendix G.

As you enter your third year, you should be completing your didactic course work, finishing your master’s degree (if you have not already done so) and engaging in your second year-long psychotherapy practicum. You should also prepare and submit the PhD Plan of Study form (see Appendix H). You will then form a faculty PhD Advisory Committee (your advisor, another member of the Clinical Program, one faculty member from outside of the Clinical Division), and select two additional faculty to serve as reviewers of your dissertation proposal.

In terms of course work, you need to complete any remaining course requirements. You also will take your second year-long practicum in either Adult or Child Psychotherapy. If you complete Neuropsychological Assessment during your second year, you also have the option of taking additional courses in Neuropsychology and one or more Practica in Neuropsychological Assessment. In this course, you administer and interpret more advanced neuropsychological assessments under the supervision of psychologists who practice in hospitals or rehabilitation facilities for adults and children. These specialized practica can be taken any time after completion of the two didactic neuropsychology courses. Dr. Christine Yantz coordinates Neuropsychology Practica placements. You may also choose to complete advanced courses in other areas (Child Clinical, Health) in which you may pursue an area of concentration (Child Clinical, Neuropsychology) or Certificate. (Information on [Psychological Sciences-affiliated certificates can be found here](https://psychology.uconn.edu/graduate/certificate-programs/); information on all [Graduate School certificate programs can be found here](https://gradcatalog.uconn.edu/certificates/).) You should also register for 3 credits of GRAD 6950 research each semester of your 3rd year.

## Your Tasks During the Fourth Year

Your fourth year should be devoted primarily to your dissertation research and accruing additional clinical experience through a Clerkship in Clinical Methods. As noted earlier, detailed information about completing and defending your dissertation can be found in the [Graduate School Catalog](https://gradcatalog.uconn.edu/) and [Policies and Rules for Graduate Study in Psychology](https://psychology.uconn.edu/graduate/policies-guidelines-resources/). (Additional information about research expectations is available in the section of this manual on Training in Research.) During the 4th year, you should be registering for the final 2 semesters of required GRAD 6950 dissertation research (at least 3 credits each semester).

### The Dissertation

All students must complete a dissertation proposal and defend this in an oral presentation to your committee and readers. You must defend and submit your dissertation proposal to the Graduate School before your first internship application is due (typically November 1st of your 5th year). The dissertation itself can be defended before or during your internship year. However, we strongly recommend, that, at a minimum, you collect all data prior to leaving for internship; it is extremely difficult to collect data while on internship.

There are specific deadlines set by the University for dissertation paperwork to be turned in to be eligible to graduate in that semester. For example, the Graduate School paperwork deadline for an August degree award is typically the 2nd week in August. To meet this deadline, a student would usually need to schedule the oral defense by the last week in July to have time to incorporate committee feedback. As of 2019, Clinical Psychology students are allowed to walk in the May Commencement ceremony if they are completing internship and are planning to defend the dissertation in the summer. For many post-doctoral or professional positions, you may not be able to start until your degree has been completed (or there may be a reduction in pay until you have successfully completed all degree requirements). The University maximum for completing the graduate program, including the dissertation, is 8 years.

The dissertation is meant to demonstrate the competencies listed above, specifically the ability to 1) critically evaluate theory and empirical studies to a specific topic, 2) formulate and conduct a research study, and 3) communicate scientific information effectively. The primary difference between the master’s thesis and dissertation is in the scope of the project and expected independence of the student as a researcher. Traditionally, the **dissertation** is 2-3 times longer because it includes more depth in background, more detailed description of study procedures and measures, and more detailed results (e.g., inclusion of some analyses that yielded null findings, more detail about analytic approaches, etc.). Further, a dissertation may include results from more than one study. The written document typically includes multiple chapters and appendices for other materials (e.g., a copy of all measures, consent forms). Dissertations typically range from 80-150 pages all-inclusive, although there are no page requirements. While the exact nature of the dissertation varies by lab, it is expected that all projects will allow the doctoral committee to evaluate the student’s success in meeting the above competencies and their growth as an independent scholar. [Required forms and processes for the dissertation proposal can be found here.](https://psychology.uconn.edu/graduate/forms/) A copy of the registrar’s Ph.D. Proposal form is included in Appendix J; a copy of the departmental Report of Meeting to Approve a Proposed Dissertation form is included in Appendix K.

### Three Paper Dissertation (TPD) Option

Starting in 2020, students can opt for a “three-paper dissertation” with the approval of their advisor and thesis committee. In this scheme, a student binds together three **journal-length manuscripts** on a cohesive topic (each forming one Dissertation chapter), together with **Introduction and Discussion** sections, and submits this document as the Dissertation. The advantages are that, if students have already submitted their research for publication, it is not necessary to “repackage” the manuscripts for the dissertation; similarly, the chapters can more readily be submitted for publication, without extensive re-writing.

Students should opt into the TPD mechanism at the time of the dissertation proposal. During the proposal, students should present the committee with the following documents:

* Brief/preliminary version of the dissertation’s Introduction chapter
* Precis of the three manuscripts that are proposed for inclusion
* List of the journals to which each of the papers have been/will be submitted
* Timeline: The date of submission for any papers already under review, and information about data collection/data analyses remaining to be done
* Notes about contributions of all co-authors to conception and design, acquisition of data, data analysis, interpretation, and writing

**The TPD option entails the following expectations:**

* The chapters address a central and cohesive question; they must be thematically coherent.
* The three manuscript chapters should be in “journal-ready” form.
* None of the three papers should involve data collected or writing prepared for the master’s thesis or comprehensive exam.
* The student must be first author of each of the three papers.
* Because the dissertation is required to be shared, with the student and university holding the copyright, the student must negotiate copyright with journals.
* At a minimum, two of the papers must be empirical (e.g., the student cannot submit more than one published review article as part of the dissertation).
* As noted above, dissertations are typically more detailed than journal articles. Students are encouraged to include material and information not submitted for publication as Appendices to the dissertation (e.g., detailed lists of stimuli, additional Tables, etc.).

### Clinical Experience Outside of the PSC

During the 4th year, you will complete a Clerkship in Clinical Methods. Clerkships are mini-internships, where students work as psychological assessors and psychotherapists in local agencies for 16-20 hours weekly. The Program has long standing relationships with a large number of clinical settings in the community. Given the large number of placements in the area and variation in student interests, there are typically more placements available than we can use in a given year. Clerkships also provide an opportunity for students to work with more diverse populations than are available in the training clinic on campus and to gain experience with specific populations and intervention models. Supervision of your clerkship activities is shared by agency-affiliated licensed psychologists and core faculty. Dr. Christine Yantz supervises clerkship placements for the clinical program. Dr. Yantz meets with students in the late fall of each year to review clerkship opportunities and requirements for the following year. All students who apply for clerkship must be approved for external placement by the faculty. Following faculty approval, Dr. Yantz meets with students individually to help tailor clerkship experiences to meet individual training goals. Students must meet with Dr. Yantz before they contact clerkship sites about potential placements; they may not set up clerkship placements in advance of this process. Once students select a clerkship site, they must complete the Clinical Student Clerkship Agreement form, which is included in Appendix L.

Students pursuing the Neuropsychology Concentration will complete a second year of Neuropsychology Practicum in their 4th year.

Students completing clinical clerkships and/or Neuropsychology Practica must meet all clinical experience requirements of the University and the external facility to be accepted for these placements. More information about those requirements is included in the Requirements for Clinical Placements section below.

### Opportunity for Teaching Experience

Students regularly serve as Teaching Assistants for lab sections of Introductory Psychology courses. Many students also seek the opportunity to develop and teach their own courses. Each year, a variety of undergraduate courses are taught by graduate students as Instructors of Record. Students who are interested in teaching should convey their interest to the Director of Clinical Training, who is responsible for teaching assignments. They must also serve as a Teaching Assistant for at least one semester. Most often students are invited to teach Abnormal Psychology. At times, other courses may be available (e.g. Psychology of Women, Health Psychology, Introduction to Clinical Psychology). Although every effort will be made to match students with their preferred courses, that is not always possible. Graduate students who are course instructors are paired with a faculty mentor who provides support as well as resources for beginning teachers. Teaching a course as Instructor of Record provides 15 hours of student funding.

Students who wish to apply for clerkship or teaching positions are required to have passed their General Exam and completed their master’s degree.

## Your Tasks During Your Fifth Year

In your fifth year, you may choose to serve as a supervisor on a vertical clinical team. If you are chosen for this position by the faculty, you will enroll in a year-long Practicum in Clinical Supervision which is melded with a course on the Didactics of Supervision and Consultation. These two courses will provide in depth coverage of theories and empirical findings relevant to providing clinical supervision and provide you with supervised practice in supervising less advanced students. All students are required to have supervised experience providing clinical supervision to junior students. Advanced students may serve as student supervisors for the vertical teams in the Clinic during the academic year, or during the summer months (May through July). The Supervision Competency Rating Form is included in Appendix M. These are to be completed by the faculty member who supervises your supervision experience.

During the 5th year, students can continue clerkship and/or teaching and students pursuing the Neuropsychology concentration will complete a 3rd year of Neuropsychology practicum. Students must defend their dissertation proposal by the fall of their fifth year and before they apply for internship. They typically complete data collection during their fifth year and most defend their dissertation before they leave for internship. Students typically apply for internship in the fall of their 5th year. You may apply to internship sites all around the country. Internship sites will want you to have (at minimum) your dissertation data collected before you begin internship. Some sites will want you to have reasonable assurance that all degree requirements will be complete by the end of the internship year.

The internship application process is arduous and begins by having you examine information about available sites. You should begin determining site placements during the summer before you intend to apply. The Program maintains affiliate membership in the Association of Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Internship Centers (APPIC), a group that sets policies for member organizations. APPIC has information about every member internship program and maintains a [portal website](https://www.appic.org/), from which you can download the most current information about member programs and the application process.

APPIC has standardized its application format with an online application and matching process. Typically, students complete the internship during their sixth year and do not return to campus following their internship.

## Evaluation and Feedback Processes

Being a scientist-practitioner psychologist requires a delicate blend of intellectual acumen, expert knowledge, personal stability, emotional sensitivity, and professional responsibility. Balancing these complementary and, at times, seemingly contradictory, attributes involves receiving and assimilating feedback about your performance and your personal style. It is the obligation of the clinical faculty to provide you with timely feedback about how you are viewed in each of these, and other, domains. **We are committed to facilitating your personal and professional growth within a supportive and interactive environment. Periodic student evaluations and feedback meetings reflect this commitment and we consider them to be an integral component of graduate training.** Feedback sessions are one way to receive the constructive criticism necessary to further your development. It is also a way of acknowledging your achievements! Clinical supervisors offer feedback each semester using the Vertical Team Evaluation Form (Appendix E), the Clerkship Evaluation Form (Appendix N) and the Neuropsychology Practicum Evaluation form (for students completing Neuropsychology Practica) (Appendix O). Feedback for V-Team and Clerkship must be based at least in part, on direct observation of your work by clinical supervisors.

Clinical feedback includes narrative descriptions of your skills and progress as well as ratings on a variety of professional competencies. Your advisor provides an annual summary evaluation and documents that on a Clinical Psychology Student Evaluation Form (Appendix P). This feedback is provided at the end of each semester for first-year students and for students who have experienced difficulties.

We believe that, to be maximally useful, feedback should be (a) relevant to your professional development, (b) understandable, (c) descriptive, (d) verifiable, (e) constructive, (f) comparative, and (g) continuous throughout your course of study. Two types of feedback exist – **formative feedback** is a continual process that emanates from your interactions with faculty and peers; **summative feedback** is a more formal process that involves receiving a written evaluation and having a chance to discuss it with your academic advisor. Summative feedback is based upon summaries of your academic and clinical work that the faculty as a whole discuss at the conclusion of the Spring semester (and also the Fall semester for first-year students). Material for each meeting, as gathered by the Director of Clinical Training, includes grades, evaluations of all clinical work, progress on research requirements, and faculty perceptions relating to your acculturation.

Following periods of summative faculty evaluation, you will be scheduled for a feedback meeting with your faculty advisor. **All faculty are obligated to hold such meetings with every advisee. These meetings afford you opportunities to discuss openly adjustment and progress issues**, as well as to problem-solve specific areas of mutual concern. If you are not invited to participate in such a feedback meeting within two weeks of the faculty meeting at which evaluations are completed, (typically at the end of the semester) please request this feedback from your major advisor and, if it is not forthcoming, inform the Director of Clinical Training.

As part of the transition from student to professional, your grades will become increasingly less important. At the beginning of your stay here, your grades reflect the faculty’s collective appraisal of how much knowledge you absorbed and how well you integrated and expressed it. As you progress through the Program, however, your evaluations center increasingly on the perceptions of your supervisors and major advisors. That said, you must achieve at least a B- in required coursework for it to count towards program requirements.

Prospective employers at internship sites, postdoctoral training programs, and in other venues will judge your suitability in terms of (a) what you have done, as exemplified on your professional vita, (b) your ability to articulate your philosophies and strengths, as called for in personal statements of research interests, personally-focused internship essays, or “teaching portfolios,” and (c) letters of recommendation. These letters will focus on issues such as your ability to get along with others, your openness and responsiveness to supervision, your ambition, resilience, warmth, sensitivity, and other personal qualities that relate to the kind of colleague that you would make. In essence**, if we agree to write you a letter of recommendation, it means that we have come to trust you -- to trust your word and to trust your actions.**

The Clinical Psychology Student Evaluation Form bridges the gap between formal evaluations of your academic work and the sort of information that is routinely provided in your letters of recommendation to internship sites and post-graduate employment settings. The form is comprised of rating scale data and descriptive comments that assess your relevant strengths, relative weaknesses, and suggested areas for growth along multiple academic and interpersonal dimensions. As part of our effort to keep the evaluation focused and useful, only those dimensions that have applicability to your particular functioning within a given year (semester for first year students) are assessed. In order to remain in good standing in the program, students must attain a grade of B- in all courses and they must receive practicum or clerkship evaluations at the expected level or above. In addition, students must receive satisfactory ratings on their annual evaluation from the faculty to document acceptable progress in research, coursework and clinical training. If students do not meet minimal requirements, an Action Plan for remediation (Appendix Q) will be created by the advisor and student, appended to the annual evaluation and reviewed in 6 months. If at 6 months, noted difficulties have failed to be addressed or goals have not been fully completed, the plan will be updated and revised. If the difficulties and goals outlined in the Action Plan remain unresolved after one year a recommendation for dismissal from the Program will be made to the Dean of the Graduate School. While it is important that you are aware of the consequences of failing to attain expected standards, in practice this happens very rarely and is almost always resolved through the mechanism of the action plan.

Although these evaluations are intended primarily for your use in successfully becoming acculturated as a clinical psychologist, they will routinely be made part of your educational records, which are maintained by the Educational Program Coordinator. We do this in order to satisfy our obligation to accurately document your performance. During this feedback process, you are encouraged to discuss the validity of the data and provide additional information that will augment existing perceptions. Our desire is to negotiate any major discrepancies in opinions about your functioning in an informal manner.

You have the option of responding in writing to your summative evaluation. If you wish to appeal any aspect of an evaluation, you should first speak directly to your major advisor. If this discussion fails to resolve existing concerns, you should next talk to the Director of Clinical Training. If any disputed issues remain unresolved following consultation with these individuals, you may then engage the formal grievance mechanism as specified in the [Policies and Rules for Graduate Study in Psychology](https://psychology.uconn.edu/graduate/policies-guidelines-resources/). The University does not have a uniform grievance policy for faculty. Some forms of grievances are addressed through the American Association of University Professors grievance policy as outlined in the [Collective Bargaining Agreement](https://hr.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1421/2022/05/AAUP-contract-7-1-21-6-30-25.pdf). Other forms of grievances are addressed in the [By-Laws of the University](https://policy.uconn.edu/2011/05/17/by-laws-of-the-university-of-connecticut/).

The American Psychological Association has adopted a series of profession wide competencies to further clarify the skills and knowledge base required for entry into independent practice. Many of these competencies are assessed in our practica courses and clerkship placements and they are infused into the goals and competencies that define the program.

Feedback meetings can also provide opportunities for faculty to receive information from you. The faculty believe that feedback is a bi-directional process. **We want your input, not only about your own performance, but about how well we are meeting our mandate to educate you thoroughly.** We expect that you will have the courage to discuss directly and honestly with us as individuals your evaluations of our efforts. The Program Head and the Director of Clinical Training also ask students to complete an anonymous survey each spring about their experience in the program. They then hold a Program-wide meeting to review feedback and discuss issues related to Program functioning with the entire Program community.

## Recognizing and Remedying Personal Difficulties

We understand that you may well experience difficulties during your stay here. Unfortunately, the potential range of problems is as large as life itself, and may include illness, problems with romantic relationships and family members, financial pressures, confusion about career choices, personality conflicts, and others. Such difficulties may lead to the erosion of your professional performance. When you experience stressors that adversely affect you, we hope that you will feel comfortable approaching any faculty member to discuss your concerns. You may want to set some limits on the extent of detail you want this faculty member to share with colleagues, but do not be so restrictive that this person cannot serve effectively as an advocate on your behalf.

Our collective experience suggests that certain types of activities create special difficulties for students. The most blatant difficulties stem from activities that are clearly unethical. We expect that you will know and abide by the ethical standards of our profession. Breaches of ethical standards will be treated seriously by the faculty; they may result in your being placed on probation, having to engage in mandatory remedial activities, or a recommendation to the Graduate School that you be dismissed from the Program.

A second blatant difficulty involves dishonesty. Professionals operate by making and honoring commitments; they understand their reputations are priceless in keeping their standing in the community. A good reputation is painstakingly built but can be quickly ruined; dishonesty will ruin one’s reputation quickly and thoroughly.

Avoidance is a third pattern that creates special problems. People tend to avoid onerous or difficult life tasks. Such avoidance is very expensive psychologically, however, in that what is being avoided nags continually at the person doing the avoiding. Avoidance also feeds on itself, breeding further avoidance. This difficulty often manifests itself in failure to complete research objectives in a timely way. Its negative effects are magnified if you remain away from campus or avoid having contact with your major advisor. Faculty will encourage your learning and involvement, but it is your responsibility to get your work done in a timely way.

A final area of special concern occurs when a student manifests **patterns** of poor judgment or interpersonal problems. In this scenario, no single problem in and of itself constitutes a blatant violation of ethics or blatant disregard of others, but a student accumulates a history of engaging in troublesome peculiar responses in a wide variety of situations. Individuals who manifest such behavioral patterns usually are unable to recognize their existence, and often do not view them as problems. Lack of recognition about how one generally affects others can create problematic interpersonal relationships with faculty and peers; these problems are not easy to address.

During your evaluation, whenever an area of concern is serious in nature (e.g., such as an unfulfilled Program requirement, accumulation of multiple incomplete grades, difficulties dealing with clients, etc.), your faculty advisor will work with you to develop an action plan of remediation. This plan should clearly outline behavioral goals and specific steps necessary to meet these goals as well as a timeline for implementation. The action plan should be completed within a month after your feedback meeting. Your advisor will place a copy of the plan in your record. **It is your responsibility to keep your advisor informed of how you are progressing with any remedial interventions and to negotiate alterations in the plan.** Any such changes should be mutually agreed upon in writing, as an amendment to the original plan.

## Probation and Recommendation for Dismissal

Our philosophy of evaluation assumes that you will be able to recognize and willing to remedy deficiencies. Failure to take feedback seriously and use it to improve may result in more formal sanctions. Ethical violations and/or patterns of unremediated deficiencies may result in a decision by the faculty to provide a formal reprimand or to place you on probation. Students on probation must work with their advisor to design and implement a remedial plan, as described above. The Program will attempt to continue providing financial aid for students on probation, but, in difficult economic times, probationary students will have a lower priority for funding.

The most serious sanction involves a recommendation by the faculty to the Graduate School that a student be terminated from the Program. The final decision to terminate is made by the Dean of the Graduate School. Major reasons for termination usually involve failure of a student on probation to demonstrate improvement within mutually agreeable time frames, conviction of a felony, and egregious ethical violations. Students may appeal a termination under the provisions outlined in the [Complaint, Appeal, and Hearing Procedures](https://gradcatalog.uconn.edu/grad-school-info/complaint-appeal-hearing-procedures/) section of the Graduate School Catalog. Fortunately, recommendations to terminate students have occurred very rarely in this Program.

## Americans with Disabilities – Rights and Responsibilities

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, educational institutions are required to make reasonable accommodations to meet the needs of students with documented physical or mental infirmities. This law is complicated and has become a battleground of intense litigation in recent years. Students should [contact the Center for Students with Disabilities](https://csd.uconn.edu/request-accommodations) for additional information. Although what follows is not meant to be exhaustive and should not be taken as legal advice, there are certain issues that you should be aware of if you wish to receive help under ADA:

1. You should declare your disability early (and certainly prior to receiving any consequences as a result of poor performance). Such a declaration will help us negotiate accommodations that will enable you to be successful in the Program. Your declaration will be treated with delicacy and in confidence by the faculty. You may also wish to contact the Center for Students with Disabilities, which will assist you in procuring needed educational accommodations.
2. The law protects those who are, notwithstanding a disability, otherwise qualified to perform a particular job, or practice a profession. That is, the law does not provide protection or redress for individuals whose disabilities **directly** prevent them from functioning in a particular profession (e.g., surgery cannot be practiced by an individual with both arms amputated). For individuals with mental disorders, the situation is murkier. We assume that you enter the Program free of serious behavioral problems that will adversely affect your ability to maintain constructive interpersonal relationships or to function in your various capacities as a graduate student. We also assume that, should you experience emotional or behavioral difficulties, you will follow Principle 1.13 of the Ethical Principles of Psychologists, by disqualifying yourself from engaging in potentially harmful activities and obtaining appropriate remedial help. Finally, it is possible that some mental disorders (those that loosen personal boundaries unduly or make it impossible for a student to learn from experience) may directly prevent an individual from functioning as a professional psychologist.
3. The University and its constituent units have the obligation to provide reasonable accommodations for your documented disabilities. We will do our best to negotiate “reasonable accommodations” to promote your success in the Program. In the past, we have provided a quiet place of rest for a student with multiple sclerosis, long-term leave for a student with chronic fatigue syndrome, modified furniture and testing procedures for a quadriplegic student, and also have helped other students obtain state Department of Vocational Rehabilitation support for orthopedic devices as well as visual and hearing aids.
4. Discussion of your needs should be an ongoing process as both your situation and our resources are in constant flux.

## Personal Psychotherapy

The fact that we provide psychotherapy to others strongly suggests that the faculty believe in the usefulness of this endeavor in terms of alleviating our own stresses, sorting out our reactions to disturbing or troubling life circumstances, and promoting our own personal and professional growth. Being in psychotherapy is not a requirement of the Program, but many students engage in this process sometime during their graduate careers. In some cases, the faculty may recommend psychotherapy to students whose personal issues are interfering with their professional development. In all circumstances, we view your decision to enter psychotherapy as in no way stigmatizing, but rather, as reflecting positively on you.

It is our policy that no student enter into a psychotherapeutic relationship with a faculty member. All faculty, however, will be pleased to assist you in finding an appropriate psychotherapist from outside the Program. A number of area practitioners have agreed to provide psychotherapy for our students at reduced fees. The Director of Clinical Training has considerable information about area-wide referral options and makes a list of recommended therapists available to all students. The [Connecticut Psychological Association](http://www.connpsych.org/) [(860) 404-0333; info@connpsych.org] also maintains a referral list of clinical psychologists who provide reduced-rate services in the locale. Many students also are willing to share information regarding referrals.

## Rights and Responsibilities Surrounding Financial Aid

Because study toward the doctorate in the Program is a full-time activity, we make every effort to provide sufficient financial aid to all of our students. Our history has been that we have been able to support students for five years. However, some types of aid, especially aid distributed by the University, may have more restrictive credit and time limitations. Information about sources of financial aid can be found in the [Graduate School Catalog](https://gradcatalog.uconn.edu/) and the [Policies and Rules for Graduate Study in Psychology](https://psychology.uconn.edu/graduate/policies-guidelines-resources/). Here, we describe some of the logistics that relate to the distribution of financial aid and your rights and responsibilities in accepting such support.

Financial aid comes to the Department from a variety of sources, both internal (e.g., Graduate School fellowships, Graduate Assistantships from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences) and external (e.g., work in the Psychological Services Clinic, working in various corporate and school settings, research grants, etc.) to the University. University-based sources, including **Graduate Assistantships**, **summer fellowship**s, and **pre-doctoral fellowships**, are allocated to the Department and divided among the seven Programs according to an agreement worked out years ago by the Program Heads. Each Program is responsible for setting their own rules for distributing these resources to students.

In the spring of each year, the Director of Clinical Training will ask students to indicate their requests for a variety of positions. As much as possible, student requests will be honored, but many factors in addition to student preference may dictate decisions regarding financial support. **The basic decision rule used by the clinical faculty is to distribute aid as equitably as possible within classes, subject to a number of contractual and pragmatic constraints, as follows:**

1. Some students will have special financial awards from the Graduate School or other sources which obligate the Program to provide matching resources, or which preclude their involvement in additional TA positions.
2. Certain positions require specialized expertise or skills. These include psychological assessment and consultation or clinical supervision in the Psychological Services Clinic, psychotherapy at external agencies, or computer or data analytic skills.
3. The existence of an “underground meritocracy,” in that if you do particularly good work for certain faculty members, these individuals will be quite vocal in requesting your continued involvement with them over subsequent semesters. This folkway is most clearly noticeable with regard to faculty who have grant support, which gives them the freedom to hire whom they wish. It also operates less visibly in the requests made by many faculty for specific students to serve as teaching or grading assistants.
4. We need to balance student requests for particular positions against the needs of the larger community and various mandates that we fill certain positions annually so that we can keep them as sources of funding. For example, the Psychological Sciences Department is required to provide Teaching Assistants each year for the large Introduction to Psychology courses. Each program in the Department must cover a certain number of lab sections for those courses. With the increasing availability of research support, it has become more difficult to meet this obligation, and occasionally requires that students assume TA hours they have not specifically requested.
5. The (relatively infrequent) occurrence of “positive serendipity” – sometimes, we get a sudden windfall of support (usually Teaching Assistantships) that must be allocated literally within hours. In this circumstance, the recipient may simply have been in the right place at the right time.

In allocating financial aid, we make every attempt to be equitable, within these constraints. Certain implications stem from these conditions, however, that you should be aware of.

**First, financial aid is not an automatic entitlement; most forms of financial aid involve meeting specific job obligations.** Even fellowship support is aimed at having you complete portions of your master’s or dissertation research. As a Graduate Assistant, you are an employee of the State of Connecticut, and covered under the GEU-UAW Collective Bargaining Contract, and you take on the rights and obligations associated with this employment status. Students are eligible for 10 semesters of departmental financial aid. Students beyond the 10-semester limit are not eligible for departmental funding but are eligible for non-departmental funding (e.g., research grants, paid practicum, non-departmental teaching). Departmental funding as well as research assistantships and some fellowships provide full tuition remission and health insurance. Once students are on internship, those benefits are no longer available; in most cases health insurance is provided by internship sites.

The type of work available varies greatly; some tasks may be applicable directly to your professional growth but many will not be. Available job positions must be aimed at meeting the teaching, administrative, and research needs of the Department and Program. We will make reasonable attempts to match your preferences for assignments and hours to existing positions. In some cases, however, we will recommend that you take a position that we need to fill for the long-term good of the Program or Department. **You are free to refuse this recommendation, but your refusal will drop you behind others for funding priorities during that particular semester or year.**

**Second, individual advisors will not seek support on their own for particular students from sources within the University.** By agreement, such requests are funneled through the Program Heads on behalf of the entire Department.

**Third, the faculty are supportive of helping facilitate your access to gainful employment from other venues, with the explicit approval of your major advisor.** For example, we have helped students find teaching jobs at nearby colleges. Such outside support will not be counted toward the 10-semester maximum imposed by the Department. **Be aware, however, that you may not work more than a total of 20 hours weekly, without obtaining the approval of the clinical faculty and the Dean of the Graduate School.** This limitation is aimed at facilitating your completion of degree requirements.

## Need-Based Financial Aid

In addition to the Department and University funding described above, you may also be eligible for need-based financial aid, depending upon your individual economic circumstances. Need-based financial aid (Federal loans and Federal Work-Study) is administered and awarded through the University’s [Office of Student Financial Aid Services](https://financialaid.uconn.edu/). Details of the application and award process, including forms that need to be completed and submitted to be eligible for need-based funding can be found on the [Student Financial Aid Services Graduate Student Financial Aid webpage](https://financialaid.uconn.edu/graduate-students/). In the past, Federal Work-Study Funding has allowed for graduate students to earn their Federal Work-Study awards by performing work in their advisor or other faculty’s labs, however the status of Federal Work-Study funds is uncertain at present; in recent years, only minimal funds have been available.

In addition to meeting financial need requirements for Federal financial assistance, eligible students must also meet certain course enrollment requirements as well as UConn’s satisfactory academic progress (SAP) policy in order to maintain their eligibility for need-based Federal funding. Please see the [eligibility page on the Office of Student Financial Aid Services website](https://financialaid.uconn.edu/eligibility/) for specific eligibility requirements.

The University is required via federal regulation to establish a satisfactory academic progress (SAP) policy; Students who are found to be in violation of the parameters set forth by the SAP policy are ineligible to receive most forms of federal, state, and institutional financial aid. UConn’s policy can be viewed on the [Office of Student Financial Aid Services SAP webpage](https://financialaid.uconn.edu/sap/).

Most forms of Federal financial assistance require students to maintain full-time or half- time enrollment. Requirements for maintaining full- or half-time enrollment can be found in the [Academic Regulations section of the Graduate School Catalog](https://gradcatalog.uconn.edu/grad-school-info/academic-regulations/).

The clinical faculty are not aware of your specific financial needs or your loan history; therefore, we do not compute your financial need into what we offer from our non-need based Department/University funding sources (described above). **Ineligibility for Federal, need-based financial assistance does not affect your eligibility for non-federal aid such as departmental assistantships, research assistantships, and university wide fellowships. It should be noted however that certain types of Department and/or University funding that you receive (particularly fellowship funding) may impact your eligibility for need-based financial assistance or the amount of need-based financial assistance you have been awarded.**

## Issues Pertaining to Clinical Practice and Malpractice

All of your clinical activities as part of your training in the Program are performed under the licenses of your faculty supervisors, or on-site supervisors at external clinical placements. In short, this arrangement makes the faculty responsible for, and more importantly, liable for, your actions. Connecticut statutes also prohibit fee-for-service counseling activities without at least a master’s-level license. Students in doctoral training programs are exempted from this prohibition, **so long as their clinical activities are documented as part of their professional training and are adequately supervised by a licensed professional.** This situation has important consequences in two interrelated areas – (a) the need to carry malpractice insurance, and (b) dangers of engaging in external professional work without faculty consent.

### Malpractice Protection

“Malpractice” is an important concept in tort litigation, in which a plaintiff claims that the activities of a professional caused damage or harm. Further, the alleged damage is not intentional, but, rather, due to negligence on the part of the professional. Determination of negligence typically involves attempts to demonstrate that the activity is below the level of care that is generally acceptable within the professional community. Being supervised is one protection against malpractice. In agreeing to supervise you, **we assume that you will follow carefully feedback and directives provided by the faculty and clinical supervisors and that your work will be consistent with current standards of professional practice.**

Having said this, it is essential that you carry malpractice insurance. **All clinical faculty members who engage in clinical practice or supervision carry malpractice insurance. Students enrolled in the Clinical Psychology Program are required to be covered under a Professional Liability policy that is provided by the University.** This insurance typically provides funds to support legal defenses against malpractice charges lodged against you as an individual and also an agreement to pay up to a maximum amount to settle claims. The University provides malpractice insurance for you, for activities that are a part of your training program, for the duration of your tenure in the program. Documentation of that coverage for external agencies is available from the Clinical Program Administrative Manager.

At the University of Connecticut, employees enjoy some additional protection from legal malpractice liability, so long as they are acting within their official teaching and supervisory responsibilities and their acts are not judged by the Office of the Attorney General to be wanton, reckless, or malicious [Connecticut General Statutes, Section 10- 235(a)(7)]. Your clinical activities enjoy similar protection, so long as they are conducted as part of your professional training (i.e., within specific practicum courses). This special immunity stems from state doctrine that employees (and students under supervision) are acting as agents of the state, so the state, rather than you as an individual, gets sued. This immunity does not apply and your malpractice policy will not provide protection if you engage in professional assessment or psychotherapeutic activities that are not a part of the graduate training program.

### Requirements for Clinical Placements

The Clinical Psychology program requires completion of six semesters of clinical experiences in our on-site Psychological Services Clinic plus at least two semesters of clinical experiences (Clerkship in Clinical Methodology) at external sites and a year-long clinical internship. If you are unable to complete all required clinical experiences you will not graduate from the Program. In order to complete required clinical experiences all students must successfully complete a background screening and health/immunization requirements as described below, prior to the start of the first semester. Clinical Psychology students will also be required to complete the University’s Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Training and the Training on the Protection of Minors. (See Clinical Compliance Requirements located in Appendix R.)

All clinical experiences must be completed through placements at a Program-approved clinical facility. UConn faculty will arrange clinical placements in our training Clinic and will facilitate clerkship and neuropsychology practicum placements. Students in their fifth year of training will participate in a national match for internship. To complete a clinical experience you will be expected to meet all of the requirements established by the specific facility. Imperative in this is the understanding that the Program is not responsible for arranging clinical placements if you are unable to meet these requirements.

These requirements include, but are not limited to:

1. Successfully completing a thorough background screening. Background screenings will include checking state and federal (and if necessary, international) criminal records and sex offender registries. If your background screening shows that you have a criminal record or are listed as a sex offender, you may not be able to secure a placement.
2. Successfully passing drug screenings. Drug screenings will occur at the beginning, as well as one or more additional times during the program. If you test positive for drug use, you may not be able to secure a placement or may be removed from a placement and/or the program. This includes, but is not limited to, prescribed medical marijuana or opiates.
3. Demonstrating that you are current with immunizations (i.e.: tuberculosis, measles, varicella & influenza, COVID-19, etc.). A record of previous immunizations is not sufficient to fulfill these requirements. If you are unable to demonstrate, through written documentation including titers, that you are current with your immunizations, you may not be able to secure a placement. It has been UConn’s experience that its partners will not accept a religious exemption form in lieu of proof of immunization and will deny placements to any student who fails to provide such proof. Due to current efficacy issues with COVID-19 vaccines, it is likely that facilities will require additional COVID-19 boosters during your time in the Program. Evidence of immunity and costs associated with testing and boosters are your responsibility. Immunization tests and physicals may be done through either your family health care provider, local clinics or the University’s student health service. Student Health Requirements for Clinical/Field Placements are listed in Appendix S.
4. You are expected to have met these requirements by August first of the year in which you matriculate here. The financial costs of meeting these requirements are generally your responsibility, depending upon your health insurance coverage. If you are not able to meet these requirements as they occur throughout the program, you will not be able to complete the program’s clinical experience requirements. A full list of student responsibilities in clinical education can be found in the [Clinical Psychology Student Handbook](https://psychology.uconn.edu/phd/clinical-psychology/resources-for-current-students/) or you can contact our Director of Clinical Training, Dr. Marianne Barton (marianne.barton@uconn.edu or 860-486-3666) with any further questions. Clinical placements may occur anywhere in the United States, and at other approved sites.

Students are required to sign a Consent & Attestation form (Appendix T) that permits the Clinical Program to collect and share information related to these requirements. In addition to these requirements, Veteran’s Administration placement sites require that the program provide information related to students’ citizenship/immigration status, Selective Service status, health profession licensure status and additional background screenings. It should be noted that students have the option not to pursue VA training if students do not wish to disclose the additional information required by the VA. Students who choose to pursue placements at VA facilities will be required to complete an additional consent/authorization and information form. A copy of the Program’s TQCVL Attestation Verification form related to the additional VA requirements can be found in Appendix U.

## Psychology Graduate Student Association (PGSA)

There are two campus groups that specifically advocate for graduate students; the [Graduate Student Senate](https://gss.uconn.edu/) on the University level, and the [Graduate Student Advisory Committee](https://psychology.uconn.edu/graduate-student-advisory-committee/) (GSAC) within the Department. The GSAC is a student-interest group that promotes academic and social development of graduate students. Some goals of the GSAC include representing student needs to the Department and University, facilitating communication between faculty and students, disseminating information about issues affecting graduate students, and planning a number of social activities throughout the school year. The GSAC is composed of student members from each program of the Psychological Sciences Department.

## Life After Graduate School

For much of your graduate career, the prospect of graduating will seem dismally distant. Suddenly, however, you realize that you are close to meeting all requirements and the end seems frighteningly near. How quickly you complete the Program is affected by a wide variety of factors, including family responsibilities, health concerns, personal choices about when it is best to complete degree requirements, and how quickly you complete your master’s thesis. Since 2009, 76 students have matriculated through the Program; 73 of those students completed their degrees. Our attrition rate is 4%. The mean time to degree completion is 6.1 years.

In accord with APA Committee on Accreditation requirements implemented in 2017, we survey our graduates at 2 and 5 years post degree to solicit information about their post graduate professional activities as well as their satisfaction with their training. We have surveyed 52 graduates since 2017 and received information from 45 of them, for a return rate of 86%. The data suggest that our graduates obtain employment in a variety of clinical and research settings:

* 40% of our graduates obtain positions at Medical Schools and Hospitals where they are engaged in a variety of clinical activities, assessment and treatment, supervision and research.
* 14% are employed at universities or colleges where they are engaged in research and teaching.
* 20% of our graduates provide clinical services, administration and supervision in community-based settings
* 26% provide clinical services in private practice settings.

Ninety seven percent of our graduates are licensed psychologists; one graduate is employed as an assistant professor and did not seek licensure. Sixty three percent of our graduates describe clinical services as their primary responsibility; 24% list research as their primary activity and 13% list research as a secondary activity. These data suggest that students in the program select from a variety of career paths and have training that prepares them for a variety of career trajectories. Many appear to combine clinical work, supervision, teaching and research in a manner consistent with the program’s commitment to integrated clinical and research training. Eighty-four percent of our graduates report that they provide consultation to other professionals; 69% report that they provide clinical supervision. Our students report that they remain active in professional organizations (84%) and attend professional conferences (82%). Many also contribute to the empirical literature.

### Scholarly Contributions of Graduates: at 2 and 5 years post-graduation (% YES)

* Published (peer reviewed) Articles: 63%
* Conference Presentations: 61%
* Received a Research Grant: 25%

Graduates report very high levels of satisfaction with their training across all professional competencies. Graduates were asked to rate the quality of their training and preparation in multiple areas on a scale of 1 (not at all prepared) to 6 (extremely well prepared). They report being especially satisfied with their training in research and clinical practice, including both assessment and intervention, and report high levels of satisfaction in their ability to apply research skills to clinical practice. They also provide high ratings on their ability to be reflective in both professional practice and interpersonal interactions and their commitment to life-long learning. A sample of ratings provided by graduates at 2 years post-graduation is listed below:

* Research design 5.3
* Critical reading of research literature 5.65
* Synthesis and integration of research findings 5.75
* Knowledge of psychopathology and diagnosis 5.6
* Knowledge of appropriate psychological assessment tools 5.7
* Ability to conceptualize case material for intervention 5.55
* Ability to apply research skills to clinical practice 5.58
* Use of empirically supported intervention tools 5.0
* Assessment of efficacy of intervention efforts 4.85
* Knowledge of ethical and legal standards 5.2
* Ability to recognize and address ethical/legal issues in clinical practice 5.45
* Ability to collaborate with professionals from other disciplines 5.0
* Ability to provide clinical supervision 4.5
* Ability to provide consultation to professionals 4.55
* Ability to consult to community groups 4.4
* Awareness of the role of cultural issues in clinical practice, teaching and research 5.10
* Ability to work responsibly with individuals from diverse backgrounds 5.3
* Awareness of the role of self-reflection in professional practice 5.55
* Ability to use reflective practice in interpersonal situations 5.45
* Ability to sustain lifelong learning and continuing education 5.75

We hope that this handbook conveys with clarity that we are extremely proud of our current and former students. We keep abreast of their personal and professional activities through a wide variety of informal contacts as well as through more formal surveys. A vast majority of our graduates report staying in touch with faculty. We hope that you will look back on your graduate training with pride and fondness. We also hope that you will take the time to provide the information we need to make the Program even better.