Programs of Research
School of Social and Behavioral Sciences: Department of Psychology
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PROGRAMS OF RESEARCH
Within the Department of Psychology there are four PhD Specializations. Each of these specializations has Programs of Research, or research topic areas which are appropriate and relevant to their field, and are represented within that Specialization by faculty who have an interest and expertise in those topics. The following document details the Programs of Research for each of these Specializations:

- Educational Psychology
- Industrial/Organizational Psychology
- General Psychology
- Addiction Psychology
- Developmental Psychology
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
A dissertation in Educational Psychology should be founded on established or emerging theoretical and conceptual frameworks within the discipline of Educational Psychology or closely related disciplines, such as cognitive science. A dissertation in Educational Psychology should make a unique or original contribution to the literature of the field. Dissertations which are solely: 1) replications; 2) problem oriented; 3) focused on practice; 4) local program evaluations; or 5) classroom educational action research are discouraged and generally will not be acceptable.

According to the APA “Educational psychology has a long and varied history that dates back to the era in which teaching, learning, and schooling first became subjects of inquiry. Today, we are committed to educational questions about learning and development in multicultural and increasingly interdependent contexts—all defined by escalating expectations and social inequalities” (http://www.apadiv15.org/).

Appropriate Theories/Theoretical Perspectives
A variety of theories and perspectives are appropriate with Educational Psychology. It is safe to say essentially all dissertations in educational psychology which are based in the hypothetico-deductive approach will require a well-articulated theory of learning with very broad scope, as well as a theory of development. When the inductive approach is used, a general, well-articulated theory of learning may be stated as part of an existing set of widely accepted assumptions which may be treated by the researcher in various ways.

Popular theories include, but are not limited to,
- social learning theory
- social development theory
- social cognition
- genetic epistemology
- classical conditioning
- operant conditioning
- discovery learning
- psychodynamic theory
- cognitive load theory
- separation-individuation theory
- positive behavioral support.

No rank order of importance, preference, or level of generality is implied.

Appropriate Topics
- Classroom evaluation
- Cognitive development
- Cognitive domain (Bloom's taxonomy)
- Conation/volition
- Community involvement
- Computer based instruction
- Cooperative learning
- Creativity
- Critical thinking
- Educational research
- Effective teaching practices
- Measurement & evaluation
- Metacognition
- Motivation
- On-line learning
- On-line teaching
- Parent involvement
- Problem solving/decision making
- Self-efficacy
- Self-regulated learning
• Family/Home environment
• Information processing
• Learning styles

Inappropriate Topics
Any topics that relate to a specific education or classroom practice or curriculum without taking into account teaching and learning. Topics related to school psychology or school counseling. Topics related to education without a psychological aspect.

Important Journals for Educational Psychology
• Educational Psychology
• Teaching of Psychology
• Developmental Psychology
• Educational Researcher

Important Professional Organizations for Educational Psychology
• APA
• AERA

APA Divisions associated with Educational Psychology
• Div 2 Teaching of Psychology
• Div 5 Evaluation Research and Measurement
• Div 7 Developmental Psychology
• Div 15 Educational Psychology
INDUSTRIAL/ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
The specialization of Industrial/Organizational Psychology includes topic areas that consider the application of psychological theory and research to the world of work and the workplace. Common broad topic areas for learners pursuing dissertation research in I/O Psychology often include the following: employee selection, job analysis, training and development, leadership, organizational development, organizational consulting, coaching, performance measurement and evaluation, employee motivation, attitude, satisfaction, and personality; work-life balance, occupational health, occupational stress, change management, diversity and fairness in employment, team building, conflict resolution, and career development.

APA Division 14: Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP) advocates the scientist-practitioner model in the application of psychology to all types of organizational and workplace settings, such as manufacturing, commercial enterprises, labor unions, and public agencies. Members work in several fields within I-O psychology, such as testing/assessment, leadership development, staffing, management, teams, compensation, workplace safety, diversity, and work-life balance.

Appropriate Theories/Theoretical Perspectives

- Career Development Theories
- Equilibrium theory
- Systems theory
- Motivational Theories
- Equity Theory
- Goal Setting Theory
- Learning Theories
- Vroom’s VIE Theory
- Demand-Control Model
- Person-Environment Fit Model
- Theories of Workplace Violence (Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis; The Justice Hypothesis)
- Leadership Theories
- Classic Organizational Theory
- Human Relations Theory
- Contingency Theory
- Social Psychology Theories
- Positive Psychology Theories
- Self-Efficacy Theories

Appropriate Topics

- Leadership
- Employee Performance
- Employee Satisfaction
- Employee Health
- Occupational Health
- Occupational Stress
- Burnout
- Employee Motivation
- Organizational Change
- Organizational Development
- Career Development
- Team Building
- Executive Coaching
- Coaching
- Employee Selection
- Employee Assessment
- Organizational Assessment
- Job Analysis
- Performance Measurement
- Cross Cultural Issues in I/O
- Performance Appraisal
- Employee Attitudes
• Work-Life Balance
• Training and Development

• Occupational Fairness
• Organizational Culture

Inappropriate Topics
Topics related to business without a psychological component: marketing research; financial strategies; organization profit and loss. Topics related to education without a link to the workplace: a topic that deals with leadership in an educational organization would be fine but a topic related to educational strategies that improve student performance would not; student or learner performance or behavior is not appropriate; any topic that is related to the treatment of a psychological disorder or mental health issues of any type are not appropriate; a topic could focus on EAPs if the focus of the study is how the EAP impacts the organization or employee performance but not if the focus in the actual treatment that is provided. No clinically oriented topics are allowed.
Important Journals for your Specialization

- The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist
- Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice
- Journal of Applied Psychology
- Personnel Psychology
- Consulting Psychology Journal – Research and Practice
- European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology
- Academy of Management Journal
- Career Development Quarterly
- Community, Work, and Family
- Journal of Business and Psychology
- Journal of Managerial Psychology
- Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology
- Journal of Organizational Behavior
- Journal of Organizational Change Management
- Leadership and Organization Development Journal

Important Professional Organizations for your Specialization

- Society of Industrial-Organizational Psychology (SIOP)
- Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM)
- International Coaching Federation (ICF)
- Society of Consulting Psychology
- Center for Creative Leadership
- Institute for Job and Occupational Analysis
- Association for Workplace Learning and Performance
- Academy of Human Resource Development
- International Society for Performance Improvement
- Organization Development Network

APA Divisions associated with your Specialization

- Div 14 – Society of Industrial-Organizational Psychology
- Div 13 – Society of Consulting Psychology
GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY
A dissertation in General Psychology at Capella University can take a variety of forms. It may be quantitative or it may be qualitative, but regardless of the methodology it should add to the existing literature on the topic at hand. General Psychology stresses the integration of multiple perspectives from a variety of subdisciplines in psychology. Acceptable topics in General Psychology can vary greatly, but should be grounded in a psychological theory not specifically related to any other PhD specialization offered at Capella.

The APA Division 1: Society for General Psychology is concerned with creating coherence among psychology’s diverse specialties by encouraging members to incorporate multiple perspectives from psychology’s subdisciplines into their research, theory, and practice. Division 1 welcomes membership from academic scientists, professional practitioners, and psychologists whose main concern is the public interest. Division membership includes a subscription to its quarterly journal, Review of General Psychology.

Appropriate Theories/Theoretical Perspectives: (examples but not an exclusive list)
- Social Learning Theory – Bandura
- Social Development Theory – Vygotsky
- Attribution Theory - Heider
- Cognitive Dissonance Theory – Festinger
- Psychosocial Stages of Development – Erikson
- Theory of Cognitive Development – Piaget
- Processing fluency theory of aesthetic pleasure
- Privacy regulation theory - Irwin Altman
- Moral Foundations Theory – Jonathan Haidt, Kohlberg,

Appropriate Topic Areas
- Abnormal Psychology
- Biological Psychology
- Cognitive Psychology
- Developmental Psychology
- Evolutionary Psychology
- Family Psychology
- Forensic Psychology
- Health Psychology
- Media Psychology
- Neuropsychology
- Personology
- Personality Psychology
- Social Psychology
- Positive Psychology

Inappropriate Topic Areas
- Treatment Outcome Studies involving patients with psychiatric/psychological diagnoses.
- Studies of vulnerable populations require that the researcher and mentor have appropriate professional credentials.
• Dissertation topics closely tied to Educational Psychology, Industrial/Organizational Psychology, Addiction Psychology, or Clinical and Counseling Psychology are not appropriate for General Psychology.

**Important Journals for General Psychology**

Due to the general nature of the General Psychology Specialization, virtually all of the APA Journals have something to offer for these learners:

• [APA Journals](#)

**Important Professional Organizations for General Psychology**

• APA

**APA Divisions associated with General Psychology**

Due to the general nature of the General Psychology Specialization, virtually all of the APA Divisions have something to offer for these learners
ADDICTION PSYCHOLOGY

Guidelines

Research in the area of addiction psychology is very theoretically precise and well developed. As such, learners engaging in this area of research need to do a thorough review of the literature in their area before proposing a research question. If work is proposed as exploring any “gaps” in research, theory, etcetera, the gaps need to be clearly described and not left to vague interpretation. Much like someone might describe how they were going to prune a tree, precision in this area of work should proceed with attention to the most relevant branches, sub-branches, and even leaves when discussing gaps. It is also important to note that while there are many opportunities in the field to help demonstrate the generalizability of existing theory and applications, studies simply replicating what is already known in a new group or context is not sufficient without a thoughtful rationale based on psychological theory. Additionally, learners doing quantitative studies should plan their research in such a way that it allows for exploration of the hypotheses of interest, while also ruling out alternative explanations.

Appropriate Theories/Theoretical Perspectives

Learners working in addiction psychology should focus on theories that are non-clinical in nature. By this we mean to avoid theories related to any specific approach to treatment or treatment in general. Virtually any psychological theory that is not solely clinical and that has not been recognized as discredited may be explored.

Appropriate Topic Areas

Examples of appropriate topics for learners in the PhD program in Addiction Psychology include research focused on the acquisition, nature, appearance, theory, prevention, or meaning of addictive behaviors, substance use, or related problems (such as gambling, eating, sexual behavior, spending). They may include study of the normal population and other non-clinically affected individuals relevant to these types of problems. They also may include examination of topics related to implementation science and involving evaluation of non-clinical applied psychology efforts.

Inappropriate Topic Areas

Inappropriate topics include, but are not limited to, those requiring the delivery or supervision of any clinical treatment or evaluation, experimental treatments or trainings, or coaching-oriented efforts related to addictive behavior and its treatment or clinical assessment. Additionally, any topics requiring doctoral level clinical, medical, and/or counseling knowledge, theory, assessment, ethics, or other skills related to the clinically-oriented treatment of or research about addictive behavior are not appropriate. Learners also are encouraged to avoid topics that are purely epidemiological, anthropological, sociological, medical, or public health-oriented in nature.

Important Journals for Addiction Psychology

In general, American Psychological Association journals (APA) are most relevant for dissertation work because of the quality of the journals and the level of content for psychology studies, theories, and other matters they cover. The journal Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, an APA journal, is one of the most appropriate.
Important Professional Organizations for Addiction Psychology

While there are a broad number of organizations relevant to addiction psychology, these identified organizations are most appropriate for doctoral learners in Addiction Psychology who are pursuing research focused doctoral degrees:

- American Psychological Association and specifically the Society of Addiction Psychology (APA Division 50) and APA Division 28 (Psychopharmacology and Substance Abuse)
- College on Problems of Drug Dependence
- Research Society on Alcoholism
- Society of Research on Nicotine and Tobacco

APA Divisions associated with Addiction Psychology

The following two APA divisions are most closely associated with addiction psychology and appropriate for consideration by learners seeking a PhD in addiction psychology.

- Division 50 (Society of Addiction Psychology),
- Division 28 (Psychopharmacology and Substance Abuse)

Additionally, however, learners will also find addiction psychology topics relevant to these divisions

- Division 38 (Health Psychology)
- Division 25 (Behavior Analysis)
- Division 3 (Experimental Psychology)
- Division 5 (Evaluation, Measurement, and Statistics)
- Division 6 (Behavioral Neuroscience and Comparative Psychology)
- Division 7 (Developmental Psychology)
- Division 8 (Society of Personality and Social Psychology)
- Division 35 (Psychology of Women)
- Division 51 (Psychology of Men and Masculinity)
- Division 44 Society for the study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues
- Division 45 Society for the study of Culture, Ethnicity and Race
- Division 34 Environmental, Population, and Conservation Psychology
- Division 36 Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality

While other divisions also may have some content-related overlap, it is important to point out that these divisions above focus more on the research, rather than solely clinical or psychological-services oriented aspects of addiction psychology.
DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Guidelines

A dissertation in Developmental Psychology should be founded on established or emerging theoretical and conceptual frameworks within the discipline of Developmental Psychology or closely related disciplines, such as cognitive science. A dissertation in Developmental Psychology should make a unique or original contribution to the literature of the field. Dissertations which are solely: 1) replications; 2) problem oriented; 3) focused on practice; or 4) local program evaluations are discouraged and generally will not be acceptable.

Developmental psychologists study changes in human development across the lifespan, including physical, cognitive, social, perceptual, personality, and emotional growth (http://apa.org/action/science/developmental/education-training.aspx).

Appropriate Theories/Theoretical Perspectives

- Bandura
- Bowlby (Attachment theory)
- Bronfenbrenner (Ecological systems theory)
- Elkind
- Erikson (Psychosocial development)
- Freud (Psychosexual development)
- Theories of moral development (e.g., Kohlberg)
- Theories of cognitive development (e.g., Piaget)
- Cultural-historical theories (e.g., Vygotsky)
- Information processing theories
- Identity Status theory
- Pavlov’s Classical Conditioning
- Skinner’s Operant Conditioning
- Personality-McCrae and Costa’s Big Five

Appropriate Topic Areas

Physical, cognitive, social, intellectual, perceptual, personality and emotional growth across the life span and policy related to individuals and groups across the life span.

Inappropriate Topic Areas

- Any program evaluation.
- Any ‘educational topic’ that does not take into account human developmental psychological aspects.

Important Journals

- American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry
- Applied Developmental Science
- Attachment and Human Development
- Behavioral Disorders
- Birth: Issues in Perinatal Care
- British Journal of Developmental Disabilities
- British Journal of Developmental Psychology
- Journal of Aging and Health
- Journal of Aging and Social Policy
- Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
- Journal of the American Geriatrics Society
- Journal of Applied Behavioral Science
- Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology
Programs of Research – SBS-PSY

Psychology
- British Journal of Special Education
- Canadian Geriatrics Journal
- Child Abuse and Neglect
- Child Abuse Review
- Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America
- Child and Adolescent Psychopharmacology News
- Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal
- Child and Family Behavior Therapy
- Child and Family Social Work
- Child and Youth Care Forum
- Child and Youth Services
- Child: Care, Health, and Development
- Child Development
- Child Language Teaching and Therapy
- Child Neuropsychology
- Child Psychiatry and Human Development
- Child Psychology and Psychiatry Review
- Childhood
- Childhood Education
- Children and Society
- Children and Youth Services Review
- Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review
- Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry
- Cognition and Instruction
- Cognitive Development
- Development and Psychopathology
- Developmental Neuropsychology
- Developmental Psychobiology
- Developmental Psychology
- Developmental Review
- Developmental Science
- Early Child Development and Care
- Early Childhood Education Journal
- Early Childhood Research Quarterly
- Early Development and Parenting
- Early Education and Development
- Educational Psychologist
- European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
- Journal of Attention Disorders
- Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders
- Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychopharmacology
- Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing
- Journal of Child and Adolescent Substance Abuse
- Journal of Child Language
- Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines
- Journal of Child Psychotherapy
- Journal of Child Sexual Abuse
- Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology
- Journal of Cognition and Development
- Journal of Counseling and Development
- Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics
- Journal of Pediatric Psychology
- Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities
- The Journal of Special Education (SED)
- European Journal of Special Needs Education
- Exceptional Children
- Experimental Aging Research
- Family Relations
- First Language
- The Gerontologist
- Gerontology
- Gerontology & Geriatrics Education
- Harvard Educational Review
- Human Development
- Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research
- Infancy
- Infants and Young Children
- International Journal of Aging and Human Development
- International Journal of Behavioral Development
- Journal of Adolescent Research
- Journal of Adult Development

Important Professional Organizations
- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)
- American Educational Research Association (AERA)
• American Psychiatric Association (APA)
• American Psychological Association (APA)
• The American Geriatrics Society (AGS)
• The Gerontological Society of America (GSA)
• International Society for Infant Studies (ICIS)

**APA Divisions associated with Developmental Psychology**

• Division 7: Developmental Psychology
• Division 20: Adult Development and Aging
• Division 9: Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI)
• Division 27: Society for Community Research and Action: Division of Community Psychology
• Division 37: Society for Child and Family Policy and Practice
• Division 53: Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology
• Division 54: Society of Pediatric Psychology