

## Attention Current Graduate Students: National Register Coursework Requirements for a Doctoral Degree in Psychology “Checklist Prior to Graduation”

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The National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology requires **current** graduate students applying for the National Psychologist Trainee Register to complete a doctoral psychology program that is either accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA) or Canadian Psychological Association (CPA); or designated by the ASPPB/National Register Designation Committee.<sup>1</sup>

Although APA/CPA accredited and ASPPB/National Register designated programs typically meet the National Register’s [‘Guidelines for Defining a Doctoral Degree in Psychology’](#); it is very important to ensure that your coursework meets the scientific foundation needed to qualify for credentialing by the National Register. After reviewing thousands of transcripts, the National Register credentials review committee has often come across graduates of accredited and designated programs that were deficient in the required coursework due to reasons such as: courses being waived, transferred, or substituted and for insufficient contact hours due to quarter and trimester courses.

If you are currently applying or plan to apply for credentialing by the National Register, it may be helpful for you to be aware of the typical reasons why previous applicants have encountered difficulty with meeting criterion 10 of the [‘Guidelines for Defining a Doctoral Degree in Psychology’](#) (see below).

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### **Criterion 10:**

“...The core program shall require every student to demonstrate competence in each of the following substantive areas. This typically will be met through substantial instruction in each of these foundational areas, as demonstrated by a minimum of three

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<sup>1</sup> Exceptions to this rule include graduate students enrolled in foreign doctoral psychology programs (outside of the US and Canada) and those who completed programs that became APA accredited or ASPPB/National Register designated after their degree was awarded. In these cases, an individual review can be conducted in the form of an application to determine if the program meets the current guidelines for ‘Defining a Doctoral Degree in Psychology’.

graduate semester hours, five or more graduate quarter hours (when an academic term is other than a semester, credit hours will be evaluated on the basis of fifteen hours of classroom instruction per semester hour), or the equivalent:

- a. scientific and professional ethics and standards;
  - b. research design and methodology;
  - c. statistics;
  - d. psychometric theory;
  - e. biological bases of behavior: physiological psychology, comparative psychology; neuropsychology, sensation and perception, and psychopharmacology;
  - f. cognitive-affective bases of behavior: learning, thinking, motivation, and emotion;
  - g. social bases of behavior: social psychology, group processes, organizational and systems theory; and
  - h. individual differences: personality theory, human development, and abnormal psychology.
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We have compiled the following list to alert you of the requirements and specific issues that often raise concerns during the application review relating to coursework, in hopes of preventing any stumbling blocks that you may encounter when applying for credentialing and licensure. This list is intended to serve you in an advisory manner and is **not** an official supplement to the National Register's published guidelines or criteria.

### Checklist Prior to Graduation

- 45 Hours per Foundational Area:** Each foundational area should be covered by a minimum of 3 graduate semester hours OR 5 graduate quarter hours. *There must be a minimum of 45 classroom instruction hours per foundational area. If your credits/hours/units are on a trimester system, be sure you have completed 45 classroom instruction hours per foundational area.*
- Single Course Covering More Than One Foundational Area:** When a single 3 semester course (or equivalent) is listed as fulfilling more than one foundational area, other compensating course coverage must be documented so that each foundational area has a minimum of 3 semester hours of coverage or its equivalent. **Example:** A 3 semester course titled Social-Cognitive Bases of Behavior may cover both the social bases of behavior and the cognitive-affective bases of behavior. Although both foundational areas are covered in this course, you have not received 45 hours of classroom instruction per foundational area. Additional coursework in social, cognitive-affective, or both is necessary to demonstrate competence in both foundational areas.
- Course Titles:** If your transcript has generally labeled courses such as: seminar, pro-seminar, professional development, directed readings, etc., be sure to provide official course descriptions or a photocopy of the syllabus with your application materials,

especially if the course(s) covered one of the required foundational areas.

- ☑ **Applied vs. Theory:** When considering your course work in the foundational areas of psychology, look for scientific foundational theory **not** application. For instance, a cognitive-behavioral therapy course would not satisfy the foundational requirement for the cognitive-affective bases of behavior; and a group therapy intervention course would not satisfy the foundational requirement for the social bases of behavior.
- ☑ **Scientific and Professional Ethics and Standards:** If scientific and professional ethics and standards are 1) covered in sections of multiple courses or 2) covered in a non-credit course, you must have your program director document in writing how this type of coverage is equivalent to a 3 semester hour course. Although other ethics codes may be covered, the central focus must be the American Psychological Association's Ethics Code or the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists.
- ☑ **Research Design and Methodology:** This foundational area should be covered by a quantitative research designs, as well as qualitative research course(s). Because the research design and methodology content area should be foundational in nature, courses that involve the application of foundational material, such as courses that develop research proposals will **not** suffice.
- ☑ **Statistics:** The foundational course(s) for statistics **must** cover inferential statistics at a multivariate level.
- ☑ **Psychometric Theory:** The foundational course(s) for psychometric theory should be **theoretical** in nature, covering detailed topics related to test construction and evaluation such as reliability, validity, item analysis, etc. **Applied** assessment courses are certainly of value, but do **not** provide instruction in psychometric **theory**.
- ☑ **Biological Bases of Behavior:** This foundational area can be covered by a course in biological psychology, psychopharmacology, comparative psychology, or sensation and perception. A course in biological psychology should emphasize basic anatomical and neurological functioning. Ideally, the course should cover micro- (neuron, synapse, neurotransmitters, etc.) and macro-levels (central nervous system and autonomic nervous system structure and functions). A course in psychopharmacology might be used if it emphasizes the way chemistry interacts with biology to produce behavior. While specific medications can be discussed, the course should be at a more fundamental level than simply a discussion of which medicines to use for which diagnostic categories. A course that primarily covers tests that help identify neurological disorders would **not** be appropriate.
- ☑ **Cognitive-Affective Bases of Behavior:** Basic courses in learning, cognition, motivation, and/or emotion would satisfy this guideline. A course in learning theory should cover more than just classical and operant conditioning. A course in learning theory intended for educators and classroom teachers would **not** be appropriate for graduate students in psychology. A cognition course should cover

basic topics such as memory, attention, language, problem solving, decision making. A basic course in emotion would also satisfy this guideline if it included topics such as: classification of emotion, individual emotions, emotional regulation, emotional intelligence, etc. A course in cognitive or cognitive-behavioral therapy or emotions in therapy would **not** satisfy this guideline.

- ☑ **Social Bases of Behavior:** The most common course that covers this foundational area is advanced social psychology. An ideal course would cover three basic sub-areas: social thinking (self, beliefs, judgments, attitudes), social influence (culture, conformity, persuasion, groups), and social relations (prejudice, aggression, attraction, helping), emphasizing the research findings from each area. A single course in group processes might also be appropriate, but it should cover the topic in a basic way emphasizing research findings. A course in group or family therapy or multicultural issues would **not** be appropriate. A course emphasizing the social aspects of the therapeutic process would **not** satisfy the guideline.
- ☑ **Individual Differences:** This foundational area can be covered by a course in personality theory, human development, or abnormal psychology.