

The New Course Sequence in Behavior Analysis at Palo Alto University:

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

A growing number of evidence-based treatments are available for the treatment of emotional and behavioral disorders (e.g., cognitive behavioral therapy for depression). One type of evidence-based treatment, however, has distinguished itself as appropriate for children who fall along the autism spectrum. This treatment is based on behavior analysis and principles, and also is appropriate for other behavioral problems, such as conduct problems, self-injurious behavior, and some forms of cognitive rehabilitation. PAU is offering a sequence of classes that have been approved by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board to count toward certification as a Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst. The sequence involves four courses (14 quarter hour units) that are typically taught at night for the convenience of those who have day time commitments. Here we provide an overview of the courses and attempt to answer questions that we often field.

1.) What is this new course sequence?

The new course sequence offered by PAU focuses on Behavior Analysis as a way to understand, treat, and evaluate clinical treatment outcomes from a behavioral perspective. Recently, the Behavior Analyst Certification Board, Inc. (BACB) approved our proposed 4 course sequence as meeting the 135 hour coursework requirement for taking the Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA) Examination (descriptions of the content of each course and the course syllabi are posted on the PAU Website: <http://www.paloalto.edu/news/behavior-analysis-course-sequence-begin-pau>). With the addition of required and approved practicum training, and with passage of the exam, individuals can become a BACB certified BCaBA. Individuals with such certification are in high demand to provide services to individuals suffering a variety of psychiatric and learning problems, including treatment for individuals with autism, cognitive impairments, and other genetic and behavioral disorders. Currently, there is a shortage of such professionals in California and other states.

2.) Who is eligible to take this sequence?

Upper level undergraduates in good academic standing, graduate students in good academic standing, and professionals endeavoring to acquire more treatment and evaluation skills from the behavioral perspective are eligible to take this sequence.

3.) When and where is this course sequence offered?

The first course in this sequence will begin in the Winter Quarter. The first class is on Thursday, January 7th, 2010. It will take place at the Gronowski Clinic, 5150 El Camino Real, Los Altos, Ca, 94022. The class begins at 7:00 PM and goes until 10:00 PM. The classes are offered in sequence. Thus, coursework can be completed in 4 quarters – 1 year.

4.) How much does the sequence cost?

It costs 500.00 dollars for each credit hour of coursework. Since there are 14 required credit hours to complete the course sequence, the complete sequence costs 7,000 dollars. There is also a one-time registration fee of 200 dollars to be paid prior to the first class. Students can opt to pay by the course (1500 dollars for the 3 credit courses, and 2000 for the 4 credit courses) or for the whole sequence in advance.

5.) How and when does one acquire the practicum hours required to sit for the BCaBA exam?

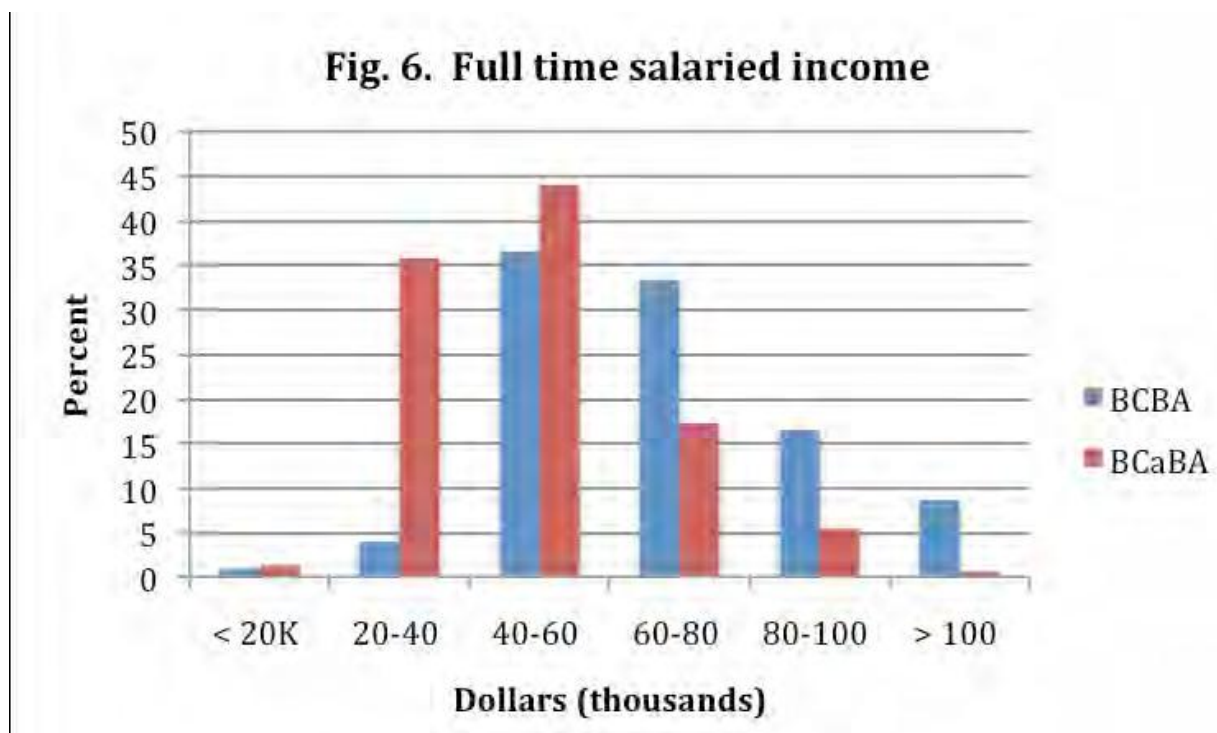
Practicum hours can be accrued simultaneously with, or subsequent to, the course sequence. Practicum experiences need to be approved by the BACB board and can be achieved in several ways (see detailed information offered on the BACB website). Currently, PAU is partnering with the May Institute to provide several practicum slots for students on a competitive basis. Several other opportunities are also being developed in partnership with PAU to provide BACB approved practicum. Conveniently, students do not need to complete the practicum experiences that PAU develops. Instead, students can develop practicum at alternative sites and with alternative supervisors in order to fulfill practicum requirements established by the BACB board. It is expected that some students will complete PAU developed practicum and others will complete practicum that they or other sites develop.

6.) What kind of jobs does the training prepare a student for?

Individuals who have earned their BCaBA certificate are in demand to work under the supervision of a BCBA or other advanced professional to provide behavior intervention, evaluation, and program development services in school systems, in treatment centers, and in private practice. Typically, the clients that are served have behavior, genetic, or brain abnormalities that have been shown to respond to behavior intervention methods. Individuals with autism spectrum disorders are a major subgroup of individuals who are served by BCaBA interventionists.

7.) Will I be able to earn a good salary if I complete the BCaBA certificate?

The graph below was excerpted from the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts (APBA) website at www.apbahome.net. It is contained in their 2009 employment survey. As can be seen, about 2/3 of BCaBA earn more than 40,000 dollars per year. The report also stresses that there are strong employment opportunities for individuals with their BCaBA. Although we cannot guarantee specific job placements and/or salaries, we do believe there are strong employment opportunities for students with BCaBA training.



8.) Can I receive financial aid to help pay for the courses?

PAU cannot speak for financial aid eligibility if you are enrolled in another undergraduate or graduate program. Currently, PAU can only attest to the financial aid eligibility of students enrolled in its Ph.D. program on an individual basis. PAU students should consult the Financial Aid office at PAU to understand their financial aid options.

9.) Are there plans to develop a BCBA course sequence?

Yes. The one additional course that is necessary to partially fulfill the requirements for eligibility to sit for the BCBA exam is being developed and its certification by the board is expected in the spring of 2010. Individuals with the BCBA certification must also have a Masters degree in a related mental health or educational area of concentration. BCaBA coursework will count toward the BCBA certification.

10.) Who do I contact to enroll in the course?

Please contact Nora Marquez, Registrar at NMarquez@paloinfo.org or 650-433-3850 to enroll in the course and to arrange for payment of registration fee and course credits.

11.) Can I talk with someone who has experience with BCaBA or BCBA training?

Several current students have volunteered to discuss their BCaBA or BCBA training experiences with potential students. Please contact Dr. Robert Russell (rrussell@paloinfo.org) to indicate your interest. One of the students will email you to provide information about their current and expected experiences.