

Essential Information for Palo Alto University's Distance Learning Program for 2011-2012

Who Are We?

Palo Alto University (PAU) is a private university founded in 1975 and located in Palo Alto, California that offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in psychology. The institution changed its name in 2009 from Pacific Graduate School of Psychology to PAU to reflect the fact that it now has undergraduate programs. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) has accredited all PAU degrees, including the Distance Learning MS in Psychology. PAU offers a Ph.D. that has been accredited by the American Psychological Association since 1988. It also offers a Psy.D. in Clinical Psychology in a consortium with the Stanford University Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences in the School of Medicine. That program was founded in 2002 and is also accredited by the American Psychological Association. PAU also offers a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology at the undergraduate level.

APA does not accredit master's degrees. Therefore it is not possible for PAU to obtain APA accreditation for the Distance Learning Master's degree. The Distance Learning (DL) Master's degree has the maximum accreditation possible.

Dr. William Froming is the director of the DL program. He has been at PAU since 1988. Before that he taught for 11 years in the psychology department at the U of Florida. The DL faculty members are, for the most part, full-time PAU faculty. They teach the same courses on campus as they do in the DL program.

What is the Program?

The program consists of 45 quarter units of coursework. There is no thesis requirement. These courses are typically taken over a two-year period during the regular academic year (i.e., no summer classes). Some students have applied to take the program in one year. While this is possible, it makes working full-time almost impossible. The courses are structured so that most quarters there are only two courses running at any point in time.

The courses in the program are the same courses as those offered to the doctoral students in the first year in PAU's residential Ph.D. program with two exceptions (Clinical Interviewing and Introduction to Psychotherapy). The courses are didactic in nature and do not contain an applied clinical component. That is why the degree associated with the program is in psychology and not clinical psychology, even though some of the content is obviously relevant to clinical psychology.

The schedule for 2011-2012 is in the table below.

Distance Learning Schedule for 2011-2012

Courses for Students Entering Fall 2011

Fall 2011

Course	Instructor	Units
P253A-DL Cognitive Behavioral Psychotherapy I	Sharp	3
T301A-DL History & Systems	Wagner	3
T301B-DL Child & Adolescent Development	Wagner	1.5
T303A-DL Adult Development & Aging	Gomez	1.5
		Total = 9

Winter 2012

Course	Instructor	Units
T301C-DL Cognitive Bases of Behavior	Field	2.5
T302A-DL Affective Bases of Behavior	Field	2.5
T303B-DL Neuropsychology	Wisniewski	2.5
		Total = 7.5

Spring 2012

Course	Instructor	Units
F201-DL Ethics in Clinical Psychology	Packman	3
T302B-DL Psychopharmacology	Wisniewski	2.5
T303C-DL Social & Personality Bases of Behavior	Froming	5
		Total = 10.5

Courses for Students Who Entered Fall 2010 (i.e., second year in program)

Fall 2011

Course	Instructor	Units
E212A-DL Psychopathology I	TBA	2
R201A-DL Research Methods Lecture	Gomez	3
R201B-DL Research Methods Lab	Gomez	1
		Total = 6

Winter 2012

Course	Instructor	Units
E212B-DL Psychopathology II	Zalewski	2
R202A-DL Advanced Research Methods 1 Lecture	Gomez	1
R202B-DL Statistics I Lecture	Gomez	2
R202C-DL Statistics I Lab	Gomez	1
		Total = 6

Spring 2012

Course	Instructor	Units
E212C-DL Psychopathology III	Zalewski	2
R203A-DL Advanced Research Methods 2 Lecture	Gomez	1
R203B-DL Statistics II Lecture	Gomez	2
R203C-DL Statistics II Lab	Gomez	1
		Total = 6

By offering the same courses as we do on campus taught by the same faculty members, we have been able to insure that the quality of instruction in the DL program is very high. Data we currently have indicate that the performance of students in the DL program is comparable to that of students taking the same classes on campus.

How Is It Done?

The program uses a number of techniques to accomplish its educational goals. We have partnered with an educational technology company (Pearson) and they host the course materials. Many of the courses use PowerPoint slides accompanied by lecture notes. A number of classes have an audio track so you can listen to the instructor as well. Readings for the classes are from texts or articles that are available on the course website in Adobe Acrobat format. Many classes also use threaded discussion groups to provide a way for students to discuss course materials with each other. Finally, chat rooms or conference calls are used to provide a forum for students to ask questions of the professor or TA. We now use the GoToMeeting technology which allows the instructor to show his/her computer screen to all students simultaneously. This allows the class to talk in a conference call while viewing the same materials. In aggregate, we feel we are able to create the essentials of the classroom experience at a distance.

You will need access to a computer with a Web connection for this to work. It is strongly recommended that you have a fairly powerful PC computer with a DSL or cable modem connection. Students can get by with dial-up

modems but it will slow you down a great deal as there is a lot of information to download over the course of the program.

Performance in class is assessed in a number of ways. Some instructors assign papers, others use tests, and some use both. Independent third parties proctor exams. Students identify individuals in their community (e.g., librarians) who can receive test materials, supervise the administration of the test, and return the materials to the instructor.

Students are required to submit written evaluations of each class and instructor each quarter. This informs us as to the strengths and weaknesses of the program as we strive to deliver the best possible program.

When Does It Happen?

Students start once a year, in September. Students cannot enter the program once classes have started. Classes end in mid-June.

The only synchronous part of the courses is the chat rooms. For those classes that use chat rooms, the individual instructors will schedule chat times that work for their classes. Scheduling chat times can be complicated when students come from around the world. Chat times will generally occur sometime between 8:00 A.M. and 7 P.M. Mondays through Thursdays and/or between 8 A.M. and 5 P. M. on Fridays. These times are all local times for San Francisco. Every reasonable effort will be made to schedule them at times that allow everyone to attend. If that is not possible, alternative arrangements will be made.

Where Does It Happen?

The program happens where you live. Because it is web based, you do not have to leave your current home or job and relocate to Palo Alto, California. You can also maintain your current work situation. Those factors represent a tremendous cost savings to you.

We currently have (or have had) students from across the US, Canada, Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and South America. Because much of the work is asynchronous, differences in location are not much of a problem. It only becomes an issue when we scheduled synchronous activities (e.g., chat rooms). At that point we find times that work for students wherever they live.

We have an on-line orientation for beginning students in September. This orientation is required so that students can get the basics before classes begin.

Why Do This?

There are a number of reasons students are interested in this program. The most obvious one is that if you are able to well in the DL program, you will be able to transfer those units into the Ph.D. on campus. That means you will

be well on your way to the Ph.D. knowing that you can master the course material and having saved yourself the costs and uncertainty of moving to Palo Alto before starting any classes.

Some people are in a work situation where obtaining an advanced degree provides them with additional job opportunities and/or additional pay. For example, teachers may now be qualified to teach psychology and that may lead to higher pay. Whether that applies to your situation is up to you to determine.

Teaching psychology in a community college is also a possibility. We have a number of graduates who have gone on to do this.

Others have had a long-standing interest in psychology and want to investigate it further. This course work will give you a real feel for where psychology is today.

Can I See Patients With This Degree?

This degree does not contain an applied clinical component, as we are not yet ready to do web based clinical supervision. Because of that, this degree is not designed for people who want a master's degree in order to see patients. If that is your goal, you should seek out a local program that might exist in the Social Work department or the Counselor Education department of a university.

If you are interested in doing clinical work as a mental health counselor in child, family, forensic or correctional setting, we offer our master's degree program. Students in this program will be able to practice as a Licensed Professional Counselor in 49 out of 50 states. Additional information is available at: <http://www.paloaltou.edu/degree-program/mental-health-counseling>

How and When Do I Apply?

We accept new students in the spring and summer to begin in the Fall. Classes begin shortly after Labor Day this year. The deadline for initial applications is August 1, 2011 but we strongly urge you to apply in the spring and early summer. Late applications are frequently unable to be reviewed because pieces of the application packet (i.e., letters of reference) are not submitted in a timely manner.

There is an online application form that can be filled out and submitted on the Internet at <http://www.paloaltou.edu/departments/admissions/apply-online/online-MS-in-Psychology-apply-online>. You can also request an application form from the admissions office by calling them at 800/818-6136 or sending an email request to: admissions@paloaltou.edu.

What Is Required?

You must be a graduate of an accredited undergraduate institution and provide official transcripts to document that. You will also be asked to provide three letters of reference in support of your application. Finally, you will be asked to write essays outlining your goals and reasons for applying

For students coming from a non-psychology background, there are 4 courses that are prerequisites: developmental psychology, physiological psychology, personality or abnormal psychology, and statistics.

GRE scores are not required for admissions. If, however, you wish to transfer into the Ph.D. program, they will be required at that time.

Can I Transfer Units From A Prior Graduate Program?

You can transfer up to 5 units of prior graduate work. The coursework cannot be more than 5 years old. It is done on a case-by-case basis. You need to submit the course description with supporting documentation (e.g., syllabus). It will be reviewed by a PAU faculty member who will either accept or reject the course for transfer credit.

How Much Does It Cost?

The tuition for the DL program is the same as on campus only it is spread across two years. Because you are not using some of the campus facilities, the fees are less. For the 2011-12 academic year, each quarter is \$5880 plus a technology fee of \$336. That totals \$18,648. There are 27 units in the first year of the program. The second year of the program has 18 units (instead of 27) so the tuition costs are lower. For 2011-12, the tuition is \$4602 per quarter plus the technology fee of \$336. That totals \$14,814. Based on our recently adopted tuition stabilization plan once you are in the program your tuition and fees won't increase.

What Do I Have to Do to Transfer into the Ph. D. program?

The Distance Learning MS in Psychology program was developed in order to provide students who may have the ability to handle PhD-level work at PAU with an opportunity to demonstrate that ability. It is our hope that every student who is admitted to the MS program will be successful in moving to the PhD.

There will be regular student reviews by the Distance Learning Committee (DLC). The DLC meets approximately two weeks after grades are in each quarter, to review the progress of Masters' students, with the particular goal of identifying and providing guidance to any students who may be encountering problems.

Students will move automatically from the MS in Psychology program to the PhD,

if they have:

1. Have met the initial prerequisites for the Master's program. There are 4 required prerequisite courses: Abnormal (or Personality), Developmental, Statistics, and Physiological Psychology. Students are required to complete the appropriate prerequisites prior to the appropriate PAU distance learning class. For example, students will take Child and Adolescent Development in the first quarter of the DL Master's program. They need to have the prerequisite course taken before classes begin. They will take Neuropsychology in the winter quarter of the first year. They need to have the physiological psychology course taken by winter of the first year. The same reasoning applies for the second year of the program. Of course, the easiest solution for this is to have all four prerequisites taken before beginning the program. Documenting that the prerequisites have been fulfilled is the responsibility of the student. Students can request waivers by detailing the basis for the request. Those waiver requests should be submitted before the fact (i.e., before the related PAU course is started) and sent to Dr. Froming.
The required prerequisite courses and their graduate "partners" are listed below.

MS Course at PAU	Prerequisite Undergraduate Course
T301B-DL Child & Adolescent Development	Developmental
T302B-DL Neuropsychology	Physiological Psychology
E212B-DL Psychopathology II	Abnormal or Personality
R202-DL Statistics I	Statistics

2. Successfully completed at least six (at least 6 unit) quarters
3. Grades:
 - a) No failing grades and
 - b) No more than one B- and
 - c) No more than one incomplete
4. Successfully completed the following sequences:

Sequence	Courses	Units	Subtotal
Research	R201-DL Research Methods	3	
	R201B-DL Research Methods Lab	1	
	R202A-DL Advanced Research Methods 1 Lecture	1	
	R202B-DL Statistics I Lecture	2	
	R202C-DL Statistics I Lab	1	

	R203A-DL Advanced Research Methods 2 Lecture	1	
	R203B-DL Statistics II Lecture	2	
	R203C-DL Statistics II Lab	1	12
Psychopathology	E212A-DL Psychopathology I	2	
	E212B-DL Psychopathology II	2	
	E212C-DL Psychopathology III	2	6
Clinical Foundations	F201-DL Ethics	3	
	P253A-DL Cognitive Behavioral Psychotherapy	3	6
Psychological Science	T301A-DL History and Systems	3	
	T301B-DL Child and Adolescent Development	1.5	
	T301C-DL Cognitive Bases of Behavior	2.5	
	T302A-DL Affective Bases of Behavior	2.5	
	T302B-DL Biological Bases of Behavior: Neuropsychology	2.5	
	T303A-DL Adult Development and Aging	1.5	
	T303B-DL Biological Bases of Behavior: Psychopharmacology	2.5	
	T303C-DL Social and Personality Bases of Behavior	5	21
		Total = 45	

5. Passed the research comprehensive exam

All required course work will normally be completed by the end of the second spring quarter following matriculation. Any deviations from this timetable must be approved by the Distance Learning Committee and, if appropriate, the Student Evaluation Committee.

Master's students have the same rules for taking the comprehensive exams as other students. However, they cannot start Practicum 2A or the Assessment sequence until being admitted to the Ph. D. program. Prior to starting clinical work in the PAU clinic (fall of the first year on campus) students must take two courses: Clinical Interviewing and Introduction to Psychotherapy. These courses are offered in the summer and require students to move to Palo Alto during the summer of that year.

Students in the distance learning program follow the same guidelines as students in the on campus program. In the event of academic or disciplinary problems, students may be dismissed from the program. These procedures are outlined in

the current PAU Student Handbook. Students failing courses will be referred to the Student Evaluation Committee.

In summary, there is a 3-step system for the Distance Learning MS students:

1. If a student cannot get through basic course work, s/he simply leaves the program during or at the end of the first two years.
2. If a student finishes required course work but chooses to stop there or is unable to pass the research comprehensive exam, s/he can receive the MS in Psychology as s/he leaves the program.
3. If a student completes the prerequisite undergraduate courses, passes the graduate course work and passes the research comprehensive exam, s/he goes into the Ph. D. program on campus. In that case the student is not awarded the MS in Psychology. After two years in the PhD program students will qualify for the MS in Clinical Psychology. Because the two degrees would be based on considerable overlap in coursework and the fact that the second MS degree would supersede the first MS, we don't award the MS in Psychology to students who enter the PhD program.

What Happens if I Don't Pass a Class?

Students who fail a class will be put on academic probation, a process that occurs for all students at PAU when they don't pass a class. The normal remedy for an isolated failure is to simply retake the class the next time it is offered. You should be forewarned that you need to pay again to retake a class and that you may not have sufficient credits available during the quarter you retake the class to qualify for financial aid. That means you would have to pay out of pocket for retaking the class. We hope the issue is one you never have to deal with directly.

How Do I Get Additional Information?

You can e-mail Dr. Froming (wfroming@palloatou.edu). He will also be happy to arrange for you to talk with current students and recent graduates of the program to get their perspective.