

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Program

1. What is the “Educational Specialist” degree in School Psychology?

The Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) is the entry-level required to work as a school psychologist within a school-based setting. It is often described as a degree in between a Master’s and a doctoral degree. After completing the program, graduates receive the Ed.S. degree in School Psychology which allows them to apply for certification as a school psychologist and work in public school settings. We do not offer a terminal Master’s degree

2. Is it an online program?

No, the School Psychology program is an in-person, on-campus program. However, we offer a few online courses. The majority of our courses are offered on campus. We believe this offers our students a better learning experience as many of the learned skills and competencies require a high level of supervision given the nature of the training.

3. What is the difference between a “school counselor” and “school psychologist”?

School counselors are certified mental health professionals who improve student success for all students by implementing a comprehensive school counseling program. They help students by applying academic achievement strategies, managing emotions, and teaching

interpersonal skills, and planning for postsecondary or career options (higher education, military, workforce). Some additional duties include:

- Provide short-term individual and small-group counseling to students
- Develop individual student academic planning and goal-setting
- Implement school counseling classroom lessons based on student success standards
- Provide referrals for long-term support
- Collaborate with families/teachers/administrators/community for student success
- Advocate for students at individualized education plan meetings and other student-focused meetings
- Analyze data to identify student issues, needs, and challenges

School psychologists are certified or licensed mental health professionals who apply expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior, to help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. School psychologists primarily work with students at risk for failure and who have identified disabilities. With these populations, their roles include

assessment (comprehensive evaluations of disability and risk), consultation with teachers and parents regarding instructional and behavioral interventions, and direct interventions including crisis prevention/intervention, individual and group counseling and skill training. Some additional duties include:

- Assess student learning, emotional, and behavioral needs
- Implement school-wide positive behavioral supports
- Monitor individual student progress in academics and behavior
- Reduce inappropriate referrals to special education
- Individualize instruction and interventions
- Assist families in navigating special education processes
- Connect families with community service providers when necessary

The roles of both school counselors and school psychologists may overlap, and often both disciplines will work jointly by co-leading social skills groups and serving on student support teams or crisis intervention teams. Relative to counselors, school psychologists are more likely to have training in behavioral analysis, mental health screening and diagnosis, and specific disability areas. School psychologists often are employed by other agencies in addition to school-community mental health centers, pediatric departments of hospitals, corrections facilities, etc.

To become a credentialed school psychologist, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) requires at least 3 years of graduate school training (specialist degree), including a 1,200-hour internship.

To become a credentialed school counselor, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) indicates that accredited master's degree programs in school counseling include a minimum of 2 years of full-time study, including 600 hours of supervised internship.

References:

- American School Counselor Association:
<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/School-Counselor-Roles-Ratios>
- National Association of School Psychologists:
https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/selecting-a-graduate-program/a-career-in-school-psychology-frequently-asked-questions#sp_counselor

4. Is the school psychology program nationally accredited?

Yes, FIU's School Psychology program is NASP-approved through 2029. As such, all our graduates are eligible to sit for the Praxis exam which is supported by the National Association of School Psychologists, in order to apply for national certification. The program is also accredited by the Florida Department of Education, and our College and programs are accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

5. Can I become a licensed school psychologist after completing the program?

School psychology graduates will need to be supervised by a licensed school psychologist for two additional years in order to apply for private practice licensure. However, graduates from our program can apply for certification as a school psychologist by the Florida Department of Education immediately after the Ed.S. degree is conferred.

6. What is the difference between state of Florida certification and state of Florida licensure?

Certification enables the professional to work in all public-school settings. Typically, they are supervised by a school psychologist with a minimum of three years of experience. Graduates of our program may begin to work as certified school psychologists immediately after graduation. In contrast, licensure enables the professional to work in private practice settings either in a joint practice or independently. Licensed school psychologists are licensed under Chapter 490 of the Florida statutes. As previously noted, school psychologist will need two years of additional practice and supervision in order to take the examination to practice privately in Florida. Private practice licensure at the specialist level in school psychology is only available in a limited number of states; whereas certification to work in the schools is available in all 50 states.

7. How long has the FIU School Psychology program been in existence?

Our program began when our university came into existence, and we have had a program for more than 40 years. It is the longest continually fully accredited School Psychology program in Florida.

8. How many students have you graduated?

We have graduated more than 400 students. Many of our graduates took positions as school psychologists in school districts in the tri-county area (Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach).

9. What is the present job outlook?

The present job outlook is excellent. Students that perform at a highly competent level invariably receive job offers. 100% of students who seek positions are offered employment within 0-3 months after graduation. Depending on personal circumstances and current hiring practices,

some graduates opt to move out of south Florida to secure a school psychologist position. Throughout the history of our program, we have placed students both nationally and internationally. Within the past 10 years, graduates have been successful in obtaining jobs and positions at:

School Districts

- Miami Dade County Public Schools, FL
- Broward County Public Schools, FL
- Palm Beach County Schools, FL
- Hillsborough County Public Schools, FL
- Lee County School District, FL
- Orange County Public Schools, FL
- Duval County Public Schools, FL
- Collier County Public Schools, FL
- Pinellas County Schools, FL
- Citrus County Public Schools, FL
- Boston Public Schools, Boston, MA
- Hanford Elementary School District, CA
- Jeffco Public Schools, CO
- Evanston Township High School, IL
- Campbell Unified School District, CA
- Los Angeles Unified School District, CA
- Gwinnett County Public Schools, GA
- Minneapolis Public Schools, MN
- Denton Independent School District, TX
- Arlington Public Schools, VA
- Montgomery County Public Schools, VA

Clinical Settings

- FIU Center for Children and Families
- UF Health Neurodevelopmental Pediatric Center

Continuing Graduate Studies

- Florida International University, Special Education
- Florida State University, Counseling Psychology and School Psychology
- University of Colorado-Denver, Doctor of Education in Leadership for Educational Equity, Early Childhood Education
- University of California-Berkeley, Ph.D. Program in School Psychology

- Loyola University Chicago, Ed.D. Program in School Psychology

10. How long will it take me to complete the Ed.S. program?

The length of study depends on the number of credits (classes) taken per semester. In total, the program requires 73 credits including the full-time internship. Students who were not education majors need to take additional courses for certification. For full-time students, they may complete the program within 3-4 years. For part-time students, they may complete the program within 4-5 years.

11. How many classes should I take?

How many classes you take is up to you, depending on your workload. Generally, a full-time student takes 3-4 classes per semester (9-12 credits). You must consider your workload, study habits and other responsibilities when enrolling for courses. Graduate school is demanding and requires much study time. If you are working full time, 2 classes (6 credits) may be more appropriate for you, particularly for your first semester in the program. If you are working part-time (20 hours per week), then you may take 3 classes (nine credits).

12. Where and when are classes offered?

The overwhelming majority of the courses are offered in the evenings either beginning at 5:00 PM or 6:25 PM. Classes are typically offered at our main campus in West Miami called the Modesto Maidique campus (MMC). Typically, classes meet once per week during the Fall and Spring semesters. During the shorter Summer A and Summer B semesters, classes typically meet twice per week or all day on Saturday. Beginning Fall 2021, some courses are offered in-person, hybrid or online.

13. Is a thesis required to complete the program?

No. A thesis is NOT required. However, students are required to complete directed studies that may require collaborative or supervised research with their professors. Students may be asked to present research at national conferences, and/or publish manuscripts in referred journals.

14. Can I take graduate level classes at FIU without being admitted into the program?

Yes, you may take selected graduate level coursework if you enroll as a non-degree seeking student. However, enrollment in any school psychology course requires approval from the faculty. Up to 12 graduate credits can be taken this way and counted toward the degree if you are subsequently admitted to one of the graduate programs.

15. I have coursework from another university. Will courses transfer?

It depends. Up to 27 graduate credits can be transferred in but your faculty advisor must approve them as part of your specific program of studies after you have been admitted. The transfer of credits will depend upon having a syllabus for the course, the grade earned (a minimum of B), and how recently the course was taken. Courses are transferred from a program where the student has earned a graduate degree. Typically, we recommend that the courses must have been taken within the past six years (before the anticipated graduation date) unless the student is currently working within their area. For example, we would consider transferring in a course on counseling theories and techniques, if the course was taken more than six years ago and the student was working as a school counselor, earned a minimum of a B in the course, and was able to provide a syllabus.

16. Is field experience required?

Yes, school psychology students are required to complete one observational and two field practica (at least 1 day a week), and a full-time internship (five days a week) in a school setting. Accommodations can be offered, but not guaranteed, for the practicum so that a student will not need to give up their day job. However, students still need to make arrangements with their employer regarding daytime hours they need to commit to practicum. During the internship, the student will need to work full time as a school psychology intern during the school day.

17. Are internships paid?

Paid internships are offered in the tri-county area and across the state as well as nationally. However, paid internships are highly sought after and competitive. As of 2022-2023 school year, all districts in the tri-county area which include Miami-Dade County, Broward County, and Palm Beach offer paid internships. Moreover, districts outside of the tri-county area in Florida also offer paid internships. However, that can change from year to year and there is no guarantee that a student will be offered a paid internship. The number of paid internships change from year to year also. Currently, the rate of pay for internships ranges from about \$15,000 to \$48,000 for a full academic year. Students need to plan financially for their internship upon acceptance into the program. The good news is that students receive a fee waiver for tuition for all their 10 required semester hours of internship. That is, they do not pay for internship credits. However, they still need to pay associated fees, such as parking, health, athletic, etc. Dr. Lazarus will submit a fee waiver request for all students prior to the beginning of each semester of internship.

18. May I do an internship out of state?

Yes. We allow students to do their internships out of state. Approximately, 10 percent of our students choose to do a paid out of state internship. They have a distinct advantage in securing out of state paid internships in comparison to their monolingual counterparts. Applicants will need to contact their advisor for information about applying out of state. If students are planning

to do an out of state internship, they need to ensure that ALL their coursework has been taken prior to beginning their internship.

19. Do you offer financial aid/assistance?

Admitted full-time students are eligible to apply for college-wide scholarships and graduate assistantships. These are available on a very competitive basis. Applications are usually due in middle to late Spring. For consideration, we encourage applicants to submit their graduate school applications no later than January if applying for Fall admission.