

## 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. 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, work force). 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/administrators/role-of-the-school-counselor>
- 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](https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/selecting-a-graduate-program/a-career-in-school-psychology-frequently-asked-questions#sp_counselor)

### **3. Is the school psychology program nationally accredited?**

Yes, FIU's School Psychology program is NASP-accredited as of August 2017. 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 the Florida State 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).

### **4. 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.

### **5. 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.

**6. 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.

**7. 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).

**8. What is the present job outlook?**

The present job outlook is highly favorable. Students that perform at a highly competent level invariably receive job offers. 100% of students who seek positions are offered employment within a few 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. Our graduates are in high demand both locally and nationally. Being bilingual and bicultural also provides a distinct advantage in securing a position upon graduation. Throughout the history of our program, we have placed students both nationally and internationally. Within the past five 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  
Boston Public Schools, Boston, MA  
Hanford Elementary School District, CA  
Jeffco Public Schools, CO  
Evanston Township High School, IL

## Clinical Settings

FIU Center for Children and Families

## Continuing Graduate Studies

Florida International University, Special Education  
Florida State University, Counseling Psychology and School Psychology

### **9. 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 four 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.

### **10. 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).

### **11. 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). We also offer some Saturday classes. 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.

### **12. Can I obtain a degree online?**

No. However, we offer a few online courses. Again, 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.

### **13. Is a thesis required to complete the program?**

No. A thesis is NOT required. However, many students engage in independent research with their professors and have been published 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 an observational and field practicum (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 2018-2019 school year, Miami-Dade County, Broward County, and Palm Beach 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 \$30,000+ 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. Bicultural/bilingual school psychology interns are in high demand nationwide and often receive paid internship across the country. 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.

### **Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Application Process**

## **20. When are applications due?**

We currently accept applications for Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters:

Summer admission – March 1st

Fall admission – June 1st

Spring admission – October 1<sup>st</sup>

The online application for graduate admission may be found at this website <http://gradschool.fiu.edu/admissions.shtml>. *It is recommended that applicants apply for **Summer Admission**, for early consideration of scholarships and Graduate Assistantships.* However, if applicants are unable to enroll during the summer semester, then they should apply for Fall Admissions.

Click on Specialist programs and follow directions on how to complete the online application. Applications must be completed online. At this time, there is no hard copy or downloadable version of the graduate application.

There is a \$30.00 non-refundable, application fee, for each application submitted and payable by check, money order, or credit card (Visa, Master Card, American Express, or Discover) is required. Payment by personal check or money orders must be in U.S. dollars and mailed to:

Florida International University  
Graduate Admissions Office,  
PO Box, 659004  
Miami, FL 33265-9004

Transcripts of all degree granting institutions must be sent directly from each college or university in a sealed envelope to the Graduate Admissions Office.

Send official transcript/s to the following address:

Florida International University  
Graduate Admissions Office  
PO Box 659004  
Miami, FL 33265-9004

Applications to the Master's and Specialists programs are initially processed within the Graduate Admissions Office, a division of the University Graduate School (UGS). The Graduate Admissions Office is responsible for collecting transcripts, GRE test scores (if required) and the application fee. Any other supporting documentation that may be required (i.e. letters of recommendation, resume, and proof of teacher certification) is processed by the department or program.

Once the application and supporting documents are processed by the Graduate Admissions Office, the application and supporting documents are sent electronically to the corresponding academic department within the college for final review. All admissions recommendations are made by department program leaders and/or faculty. Letters of acceptances are sent out by the University Graduate School and by program faculty.

## **20. What should I include in my autobiographical statement and how long should it be?**

The applicant should include information related to their life experiences, academic background, leadership, and work history that relates to children and youth. It is helpful to describe why the applicant wishes to become a school psychologist and how they arrived at this decision. Personal information not included in the resume or CV may be included here in order for the admissions committee to understand better the motivation and commitment of the applicant. It is recommended that the applicant include in their autobiographical statement a particular problem or issue that impacts children and youth and how their training in school psychology may help them mitigate the problem or move toward a solution. A statement of 1200 to 2000 words would fit this requirement.

## **21. What might slow up my admission process?**

At times, students request letters of recommendation from employers or faculty members that have not been sent in to the Graduate Admissions Office. Also, the university requires that transcripts be sent from all colleges or universities that the student attended. At times, students may have only attended a college or university for one semester or one year and if that transcript is not received then the application would be considered incomplete even if the transcript for the graduating college or university is received. Consequently, it behooves the student to follow up on their application packet to ensure that all materials have been received by the Graduate Admissions Office.

## 22. What if I am an international student?

If you are an international student, applications are due on the following dates: for Fall Semester admissions, applications must be received by **April 1st**. The last day for international students to submit all supporting academic credentials, appropriate test scores, and the Declaration and Certification of Finances is June 1st. For Spring Semester admissions, applications must be received by September 1st. The last day for international/out of state students to submit all supporting academic credentials, appropriate test scores, and the Declaration and Certification of Finances is October 1st. For summer semester admissions, applications must be received by February 1. The last day for international students to submit all supporting academic credentials, appropriate test scores, and the Declaration and Certification of Finances is March 1st.

In addition to the above application requirements, international applicants must provide:

**Translations:** Official transcripts or other documents in a language other than English must be translated by an official translation agency. Translations must be submitted to the **Graduate Admissions Office**.

**TOEFL or IELTS:** The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Testing System (IELTS) exam is required of an applicant from a country where English is not the official language or when an applicant's bachelor's degree is not from an accredited U.S. institution. (Applicants who hold an undergraduate degree from an institution within the United States or other English-speaking countries are not required to submit TOEFL/IELTS.) The TOEFL score must reflect a minimum score of 80 on the iBT TOEFL or 550 or higher on the paper-based exam and a minimum score of 213 on the computer-based exam. An overall score of 6.3 is required for the IELTS. Official copies of test scores must be sent to the Graduate Admissions Office.

Send translations and official scores to the following address:

Florida International University  
Graduate Admissions Office  
PO Box 659004  
Miami, FL 33265-9004

## 23. Do I need to take the GREs? If so, what is the minimum score requirement?

It depends. Because the program requires test scores as part of admission, some applicants may opt to take the GRE in lieu of the General Knowledge Test (GKT). The GRE would likely be necessary for applicants who are residing out of state.

There is no minimum score cutoff for the GRE. We look at the application as a whole when making decisions to invite applicants for an interview.



Send official scores to the following address:

Florida International University  
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PO Box 659004  
Miami, FL 33265-9004

**24. I am currently an undergraduate student in either education or psychology, are there are courses that you recommend that I take?**

We recommend that you take undergraduate courses in psychology if you are an education major and that you take undergraduate courses in psychology if you are an education major.

**25. I am not majoring in either in education or psychology, but wish to become a school psychologist. What do you recommend?**

We recommend that you take a minimum of 15 hours of courses in psychology at the undergraduate level. Please refer to the recommended courses below.

**26. My bachelor's degree is not in education. Can I still apply to the program?**

Yes, but you will have additional coursework (approximately 9-12 credit hours) to prepare you for certification from the Florida Department of Education. You can take these courses prior to or during enrollment.

**27. My bachelor's degree major is not in psychology. Can I still apply to the program?**

Yes, as long as you have 15+ semester hours in psychology at the undergraduate level.

**28. If I do not have 15 semester hours of psychology, then what courses do you recommend?**

The name of the courses may differ depending upon the university. We recommend the content in these courses:

• Introduction to Psychology	• Educational Psychology
• Personality Theory	• Abnormal Psychology
• Social Psychology	• Tests and Measurement
• Research Methods in Psychology	• Human Growth and Development
• Human Learning	• Statistics

Though we require only 15 hours of psychology, 18 hours is preferred. Courses do not need to be taken in the Psychology Department. For example, at FIU, Educational Psychology is offered in the School of Education and Human Development.

**29. I have a disability. Will this prevent me from being admitted?**

No. We accommodate students with disabilities and have specific services available to offer the requisite assistance. Please see page 25 of this *Handbook* for specific information about Disability Services for Students.

**We await your application. School Psychology is a highly rewarding career.**

