

Which Graduate Developmental Psychology Program Is Right For Me?

Students interested in pursuing graduate studies in the fields of **Developmental Psychology** or **Child Development** have several options to choose from at the University of Pittsburgh. This document guides students in making these choices.

Developmental Psychology or Applied Developmental Psychology?

There are two distinct doctoral programs in developmental psychology at the University of Pittsburgh. The Developmental Psychology Program is located in the Department of Psychology in the School of Arts and Sciences: <http://www.psychology.pitt.edu/developmental-program>. The Applied Developmental Psychology Program is located in the School of Education: <http://www.education.pitt.edu/AcademicDepartments/PsychologyinEducation/Programs/AppliedDevelopmentalPsychology/DoctorofPhilosophyPhD.aspx>. The primary distinction between these programs is the extent to which the training is “applied.”

The Developmental Psychology Program is for students who seek doctoral training in developmental theory and research, examining typical and atypical developmental processes. Students are accepted only for doctoral training. Research topics range from basic research questions to more applied issues. Examples of topics currently under investigation include the development of communication, prosocial behavior, and social understanding in infants and toddlers; development of emotion production and discrimination in children with autism; relations between family level economic disparities and children’s school readiness and achievement.

The Applied Developmental Psychology Program offers a Masters degree and a Doctoral degree. The doctoral program is for students interested in training in developmental theory and research that is highly contextualized and focuses on questions that are directly meaningful in real-world applied settings. Current research topics include social-emotional learning, motivation, out-of-school time programs, classroom climate, and academic learning at home and school (pre-K – 12). The Masters (MS) program is designed for students interested in working with children, youth, families, and programs in applied settings (e.g. community-based organizations, program evaluation, wraparound service agencies, alternative schools, out-of-school time programs). There are four specializations in the MS program: Child and Youth Work (CYW); Behavioral Health in Schools and Communities (BHSC); Children with Special Health Care Needs (with Child Life option; CSHCN); Applied Research Methods for Child and Youth Serving Organizations (ARMO). See the following for details about the MS training program: <http://www.education.pitt.edu/AcademicDepartments/PsychologyinEducation/Programs/AppliedDevelopmentalPsychology/MasterofScienceMS.aspx>.

Clinical/Developmental Joint Training Program

Students interested in research concerning developmental psychopathology may also consider applying to the Joint Clinical/Developmental Program, a doctoral program in the Psychology Department that combines clinical training with developmental training: <http://www.psychology.pitt.edu/graduate/joint-training-programs/clinical-developmental-joint-program>. This unique program is designed for students who seek to become clinically informed researchers on issues pertaining to child development and family functioning in atypical or at-risk populations. Note

that students interested in topics related to risk, resilience, atypical development, and/or psychopathology may conduct relevant research and complete their degree in any of the three doctoral programs. However, the joint Clinical/Developmental program is the only one to provide hands-on clinical psychology training. This program typically requires one year of additional study plus a pre-doctoral yearlong internship, potentially leading to licensure as a clinical psychologist. The joint Clinical/Developmental program is accredited by the American Psychological Association.

Choosing the Right Program

The chart below summarizes the differences among the programs described above. The Developmental Psychology Program and the Joint Clinical/Developmental Program are options in the Department of Psychology, which offers full-time doctoral training with an emphasis on research. The Applied Developmental Psychology Program is an option in the School of Education and admits students who wish to pursue either doctoral level training (PhD) or a Masters degree (MS). The PhD program provides full-time training in mixed methods, applied research. Both part-time and full-time study are available for the MS program.

Funding

The Developmental Psychology Program and the Joint Clinical/Developmental Program admit full-time students who are funded with Research, Teaching, or Graduate Student Assistantships for 12 months per year, typically for four to six years. An additional annual research & travel stipend is available for students in good standing. Similarly, the Applied Developmental Psychology Program selects full-time doctoral students for assistantship support, while part-time graduate students and Masters level students do not typically receive financial support.

Applications

Students may apply to one or more of these programs, but they should tailor their applications appropriately. Applicants to programs in the Department of Psychology should indicate whether they are interested in the Developmental Program, the Joint Clinical/Developmental Program or both. For application procedures, see <http://www.psychology.pitt.edu/graduate/graduate-admission-requirements/how-apply>. Applicants to the Applied Developmental Psychology Program in the School of Education must apply separately to either the Masters or Doctoral Program (see <http://www.education.pitt.edu/AcademicDepartments/PsychologyinEducation/Programs/AppliedDevelopmentalPsychology/AboutAppliedDevelopmentalPsychology.aspx>).