BANDLab

BIOBEHAVIORAL ADJUSTMENT & NEURODEVELOPMENT LABORATORY

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

Grad Plans 101

Why to pursue a post-bacc?

Gain Research Experience

Explore your research interests

Take time off from being a student!

How to find:

-Academic Twitter

-Listserves (eg., cogdevsoc)

-Established post-bacc programs (e.g., NIH)

-Use connections with professors

-Cold emailing

https://cogdevsoc.org/listserv/

Post-Bacc

Programs	Job
1-2 years	Length varies
Application process	Fill out a job application (CV, cover letter, elevator pitch)
Follows timeline similar to grad school apps	You are hired in a full-time or part-time research position
You are hired in a full-time research position	Job is to move the research forward
Time dedicated to research job	You can still get great mentorship and take the lead on projects
Time dedicated to academic preparation (courses, workshops, seminars)	Should be seen as a steppingstone
Requirement to apply is that you intend to pursue a research program	You can still get grad school application resources and prep
Grad school application resources and preparation	

Post-Bacc

Some programs:

Minnesota Inclusive Neuroscience Development Scholars (MINDS) Program

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

BRIDGE TO THE PH.D. PROGRAM IN STEM

Research Scholar Initiative

Emerging Scholars Initiative (ESI) Post-Baccalaureate Research Education Program

Materials should include information about your prior research experience(s) and/or barriers that have prevented you from obtaining research experience. If your past research experience is limited, describe your research interests for the future.

Post-Bacc

Some job names:

- Research Assistant (RA)
- Laboratory Manager
- Post-Bac Researcher
- Research Technician
- Research/Project/Study Coordinator
- Post Grad Research Associate

- Bachelors in psychology, cognitive science or related field.
- 1-2 years of related research experience (or an equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered)
- Strong organizational skills
- Keen attention to detail
- Very responsible, good time management
- Administrative experience and experience working with children is preferred
- Must be comfortable interacting with children, with undergraduate students, and community members
- Computer literacy
- Experience with specific software and apparatus used in the lab (ex. Qualtrics, eye-tracker, R, SolidWorks)

Masters or PhD?

Masters	PhD
2 years	5–7 years
Predominantly coursework, usually with a culmination project/thesis	~2 years of coursework combined with independent research work. After coursework is done, more focused on independent research work
Non-funded or limited assistantships	PhD projects often come with some level of funding equivalent and tuition fees are waived in exchange for being a teaching or research assistant
If you have a specific career or profession in mind and want to develop the necessary practical skills for that	If your goal is to become a university professor or to dedicate your career to researching at companies/other institutions

Commonly, a master's degree is integrated into a PhD program. But terminal masters are not guaranteed.

Master's and doctorate degrees prepare you for different occupations and work positions, and which one is the right for you depends on what kind of career you are planning to pursue.

Spend some time thinking why a PhD:

Worse reasons

- You want a PhD to validate that you are a smart, worthy person

- You love college and would like to remain on a college campus by any means possible

- You aren't sure what to do with your life, but liked your psychology classes

Better reasons

- You have worked as a researcher in one or more psychology or neuroscience labs and loved the experience

- You find yourself thinking about psychology-related research questions and how to answer them even in your spare time

- You frequently find yourself gravitating to research related news stories and wishing you had been the one conducting the exciting research you read about

https://abigailmarsh.com/recommendations-and-advice-for-potential-phd-applicants/

Psychology PhD Areas:

Clinical	Developmental	Cognitive	Social
Tends to take more of a medical/disease-oriented model. Diagnosing different mental health concerns, treating specific disorders.	Aims to explain growth, change and consistency through the lifespan. Prenatal, cognitive, social/emotional, language and Communication, attachment, etc.	How the human brain works and how people think, learn, and make decisions.	How people's thoughts, feelings, beliefs, intentions, and goals are constructed within a social context and interactions.

There are more areas! They tend to be interdisciplinary, and/or combine neuroscience methods

When do I know I'm ready?

Research experience is heavily emphasized

- Often full time RA positions after undergrad
    - Less common to be accepted right after UG

- Obtaining Research Experience
    - Research labs at UG school
    - Paid RA positions after UG
    - Volunteer research positions
    - Course requirements (independent studies, honors thesis, etc.)

    Presentations and Publications are a big plus!

Quality over Quantity!

Applications timeline:

May-Sept	Sept – Nov	Nov-Dec	Dec-Feb	Feb-April
• Create your list • Prepare/Take GRE	• Contact PIs • Prep Application Materials	• Apps are due Nov 15th or Dec 1st	• Reviewing • Interviews	• Offers • Acceptance deadline

-Some schools/programs do not require GRE anymore, but most Clinical programs do.
-PIs have personal policies about being contacted.

-Everyone's timeline is different!

Define your research interest:

- What is most exciting to you? What do you keep coming back to?
- Determine your broad research question
- What do you need to answer it? Just behavioral data or also neuroimaging?
- Can you write it in 1-2 sentences?

Kate's: Intergenerational transmission of mental health risk from parent child and the biological mechanisms that underlie these processes.

Jenny's: Understanding how relationships in early life are related to development and well-being.

How to identify potential PIs:

-Identify researchers whose work excites you

-Talk to your research mentors

-Focus on both the mentor and the program

-Found a great potential mentor? Is there someone else in the program whose work might align?

-You want to identify 2-3 potential mentors per institution!

You apply to the PI, but both PI and institution are important!

PI's expectations can vary!

How to identify potential PIs: Example

Read papers that interest you.
Who are these authors?

Oh wow, Dr. Brieant is an alumni at a lab!
What is Dr. Brieant up to now?

Characterizing the dimensional structure of early-life adversity in the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study
A Brieant, A Vannucci, H Nakua, J Harris, J Lovell, D Brundavanam, ...
Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience 61, 101256

Differential associations of adversity profiles with adolescent cognitive control and psychopathology
A Brieant, C Clinchard, K Deater-Deckard, J Lee, B King-Casas, ...
Research on Child and Adolescent Psychopathology 51 (12), 1725-1738

Parsing Heterogeneity in Developmental Trajectories of Internalizing and Externalizing Symptomatology in the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development Study
A Brieant, KI Ip, B Holt-Gosselin, D Gee
PsyArXiv

Lab Alumni

Alexis Brieant
Postdoctoral Fellow
Alexis is a Susan Nolen-Hoeksema Postdoctoral Fellow at Yale and a member of the CANDLab. She completed her B.A. at the State University of New York at Geneseo and her Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology at Virginia Tech. Alexis's research focuses on how adversity and social determinants of health shape neurodevelopment and mental health during childhood and adolescence. She aims to identify factors that exacerbate risk for psychopathology, as well as factors that promote resilience and adaptation in youth. Alexis's work is embedded within a developmental psychopathology framework, and she leverages interdisciplinary approaches, multiple levels of analysis, and longitudinal modeling to understand and mitigate disparities in youth mental health. You can learn more about her work here.

University of Vermont

Family, Environment, Resilience, and Neurodevelopment Lab
Department of Psychological Science
University of Vermont
Director: Dr. Alexis Brieant
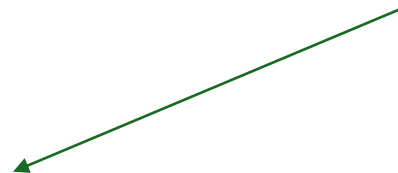
Dr. Brieant is now a faculty at UVM!

Graduate Students

I will be reviewing Ph.D. student applications in Fall 2024 (for Fall 2025

GRE+TOEFL/IELTS:

English Proficiency:

-Often required for international students; however, commonly waived if you are from certain countries or have completed undergrad or a master's degree at an English-speaking university.

GRE:

-Graduate Record Examination composed of 2 verbal reasoning, 2 quantitive reasoning, and 1 essay section (offered most days of the week)

-GRE Psyc Subject Test: Covers broad information taught in introduction to Psyc courses (only offered 3-4 times per year)

Do not wait to take the test, in case you need to retake it. Retaking this might take time.

-Low GPA, you can try to "impress" with your GRE scores.

-But most schools take a holistic approach to applications, but always good to double check!

-GRE is being used less and less, but always double check!

Identify **Your** Priorities:

- Identify your research interests before looking for potential PIs

- What mentorship style would work for you? Lab size/vibe? Co-mentoring?

- Finances: How much does it cost to apply to that school? Can you live in that area on that stipend?

- Geographical limitations: Can you afford to relocate? Do you need/want to live in a big city? Do you need/want to be close to your family?

- Considering moving with a partner? Need to identify priorities together

- International students: Is funding guaranteed? Are there grants/fellowships that do not require US citizenship or permanent residency? The visa sponsored by the program allows you to work long term in the US? OPT?

Rank your priorities! Where are you flexible where are you not?

Identify **Their** Priorities:

- Research fit!!!

- Experience and interest, what do you bring to the table!

- What progress does the advisor generally expect from a student in the course of a semester? Submission/Publication pace?

- Motivated and up for the challenge!

Reaching out to potential PIs:

- PIs have different policies! Some encourage that you email them, for others this is a hard no!

Dr. Gabard-Durnam **is accepting graduate student applications**
If you are an interested prospective student, please feel free to email Dr. Gabard-Durnam (l.gabard-durnam@northeastern.edu) to introduce yourself and share your research interests. It is also helpful to include a copy of your CV with your email. We look forward to hearing from you!

applicants, individual conversations with prospective students generally do not occur until after applications are submitted, at which time top candidates are invited for an initial interview. However, if you would like to indicate your interest prior to application, feel free to complete this Google Form.

I am not accepting new students for Fall 2023

Reaching out to potential PIs:

Intro: Your name, university affiliation/student status/current place of employment or position, and reason for writing.

> Example: *Hi, my name is (x), and I am currently in my (nth) year of the (degree name) program at (school name). I am writing to ask if you are taking students for the (Fall/Spring, year) semester.*

Body: Very brief elevator pitch/statement of your research interests, current or representative projects, and how that relates to their brand of research.

> Example: *Broadly, I am interested in (xyz). Currently, I am working on a project about (xyz). This seems like a good fit with your research interests because (xyz).*

Closing: Thank the professor for their time! (You can also let them know if you're attending any upcoming conferences in your shared field of study, in case they want to meet you).

> Example: *Thank you so much for your time! If you are attending SSSP this October in Tennessee, it would be great to talk in person.*

https://www.plasticityinneurodevelopmentlab.com/resourcesforresearchers/grad-school-application

You decide to apply? Time to get organized!

Massive Spreadsheet! 😄

PI of interest	Program of Interest	University	Location	Notes about PI	Links		PIs recruting for 2025?	PI open to be contacted?

Aspect of program curriculum I am intered in	Program funding	GRE required?	Apps requirements	App fee	App deadline		Email sent?	Response:		Final decision on applying:	

*Number of places people apply tend to vary! It can be 8-10 all the way to 20!

The Grad School Application:

- Online account

- Statement of Purpose / Research Statement

- Personal Statement

- CV

- Transcripts

- Letters of recommendation (often 3)

- Diversity Statements (sometimes)

- Writing Sample (sometimes)

- Standardized tests

Organization is Key:

University	Program	PI	Portal Link	Account created	username password	Online info completed	Statements			Statement requirements
							Purpose	Persona	Diversity	

Writing Sample	Transcript requirement: official or unofficial	Transcript 1	Transcript 2	Dr. X	Dr. Y	Dr. Z	Rec letters deadline
				Rec letter 1	Rec letter 2	Rec letter 3	

CV	Additional/ Supplemental material	Applied to waiver?	Waiver obtained?	App paid and submitted?

Materials Overview - Statements:

Personal statement: Is a narrative that highlights your motivation for your research interests, how everything that you have done up to now prepared you for the next step. Opportunity to provide greater context about who you are as a person.

Statement of Purpose/Research Statement: State your broad research question, elaborate on your research experiences, reiterate your career goal in the context of your research experience. Discuss why you are qualified, talk about your skills. Discuss what about the lab/program excites you and how you will benefit from the lab/program. Explain why you are a good fit!

https://icd.umn.edu/next-gen-psych-scholars

Materials Overview - CV:

- Education
- Honors/scholarships/awards
- Research Experience
- Publications if any
- Presentations
- Professional/Teaching experience
- Community and Volunteer work if any
- Professional Affiliations
- Skills
- References

Nope!

Yes!

Materials Overview –Letters of Rec:

Goal is to have strong positive letters of recommendations.

Individuals who can speak of your research competence, academic competence, outreach and involvement*
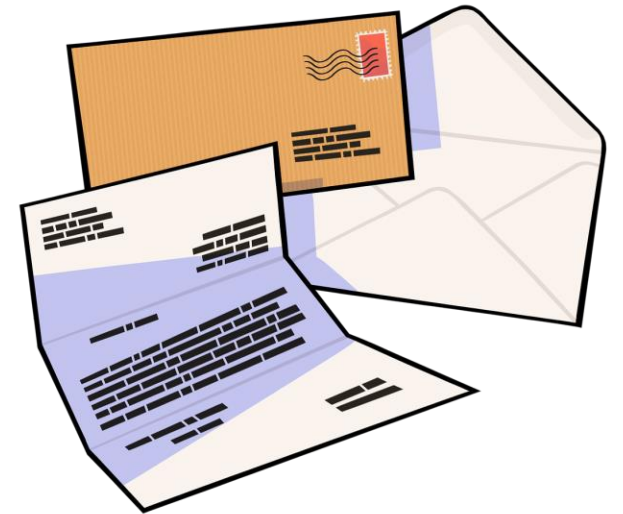
Additional Resources:

Welcome!

The first student-led organization committed to working to shrink the socioeconomic gap in medical and graduate school -- one application at a time

PROJECT SHORT

NextGen Psych Scholars Program

A virtual graduate student-led program centering the experiences of underrepresented (e.g., BIPOC, low-income, first-gen, LGBTQIA+) students which mentors undergraduates and post-baccalaureates interested in applying to psychology PhD programs

PINE LAB

Lab Culture   Research   People   Publications   HAPPE Software   Questionnaires   News   Join PINE Lab   Resources   Participate

Psych Research List

In this section you can find lists for:
Paid Internships,
Virtual graduate school information sessions,
Resources for applying to graduate school,
and Postbac Jobs list!

Graduate School Application Resources

Questions to Ask During your Ph.D. Interview and When Deciding on a Program via Laurel Gabard-Durnam	**Spreadsheet of Factors to Evaluate in Making a Graduate School Decision** via Laurel Gabard-Durnam	**How to Prepare for Graduate School Interviews** via Melissa Dreier	**Templates for Asking for a Letter of Recommendation** via Melissa Dreier
Navigating Your Application from start to finish for non-clinical and clinical Psychology Programs via Laurel Gabard-Durnam and Cora Mukerji (slides from info	**VIDEO: Navigating your application from start to finish for non-clinical and clinical Psychology Programs** via Laurel Gabard-Durnam and Cora Mukerji (video recording of 10/28/22 session)	**Email Template for Getting in Touch with Prospective Mentors/Lab Heads** via Abby Nissenbaum	**Tips for Applying to Clinical Psychology Graduate Programs** via Stephanie Wells & Shannon Blakey