



# Northeastern University

## Bouvé College of Health Sciences

### School Psychology Program FAQs

*Thank you for your interest in the field of school psychology and in Northeastern's accredited school psychology training programs (MS/CAGS and PhD). The PhD program is accredited by the American Psychological Association, and the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The MS/CAGS program is accredited by the National Association of School Psychologists and the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The school psychology faculty developed this document to help prospective students learn more about our program.*

#### **What makes Northeastern's school psychology programs special?**

Both the MS/CAGS and PhD programs are distinct for a number of reasons, including strong faculty mentoring relationships with students, a supportive learning community, a rigorous curriculum with excellent applied training in both research and practice, an ecological and multicultural approach to learning with a focus on family, school and community systems, culture, and diversity, a strong network of practice sites for field placements in urban schools and opportunities to develop leadership skills.

#### **What is the employment landscape like for your program graduates?**

In general, the job market is extremely positive for school psychologists. Our alumni receive job offers soon after graduation and oftentimes they have multiple job offers to choose from in the summer after graduation. Opportunities to develop expertise in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) or Early Intervention (see concentration information below), opportunities to engage in school psychology research and scholarship by co-presenting with faculty at conferences and co-authoring articles, and leadership opportunities available through Northeastern's local Student Affiliates in School Psychology (SASP) chapter help our students' resumes "stand out from the crowd" when they are applying for jobs. Our program has a 100% pass rate on the School Psychology Praxis Exam. Additional statistics about the program can be found at the link below:

<http://apps.nasponline.org/standards-and-certification/graduate-education/index.aspx?id=166153>

#### **Does my undergraduate major need to be psychology to apply to the program?**

No. Although most applicants to the program were psychology majors in college, some are not. Our program does require the following four undergraduate psychology courses as prerequisites: (1) Introduction to Psychology; (2) Research Methods and Statistics (in psychology or in another social science field); (3) Developmental Psychology; and (4) Abnormal Psychology.

#### **Do I have to complete all of the prerequisite undergraduate courses before applying to the program?**

Applicants can be admitted to the program conditionally, pending completion of the prerequisite courses. It is expected that conditionally accepted applicants pass all of the prerequisite courses prior to beginning the school psychology program. The program is flexible about how incoming students meet the prerequisite requirement—the courses can be taken through an online course offered at an accredited university or at a community college if that is more convenient and affordable.

**Is the GRE required for admissions?**

The program does not require GRE scores.

**What is a CAGS degree?**

CAGS stands for Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study and is the equivalent to an Educational Specialist (EdS) or 6<sup>th</sup> year degree. Our program prepares students for National Certification in School Psychology (NCSP) and Massachusetts licensure in school psychology.

**Can you apply to both the MS/CAGS and PhD program in the same year?**

Yes, applicants can apply to both programs. Applicants should indicate on the application to the PhD program that they are also interested in the MS program.

**Is there funding for students in the program?**

Northeastern University requires that all PhD students be funded through the completion of their coursework. Stipended Graduate Assistantships (SGAs) provide the student with tuition remission (12 semester hours per term) + stipend. In exchange, students do 20 hr/week of work with faculty members, which may involve research assistance, teaching/administrative support, or a combination of the two.

Typically, there are a small number of scholarships for MS/CAGS students, which are awarded based on merit. No additional application is needed to be considered for these awards.

**Can the program be completed on a part-time basis?**

The program is full-time, so while students may work while they are enrolled in the program, the faculty expects that students attend the program on a full-time basis.

**Is there an option for spring (January) admission into the program? No.**

All admissions are for the fall semester only.

**Do you offer study-abroad opportunities?**

No, though some students have independently pursued international training or language opportunities.

**Tell me more about the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) concentration.**

The ABA concentration provides students with a certificate in Applied Behavioral Analysis. The course sequence in the concentration is an Approved Course Sequence (ACS) according to the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB), so students are able to sit for the BCBA exam after graduation. Additionally, the Department assists students in identifying local field placements for the third year when they are taking the ABA Intensive Practicum course alongside the School Psychology Internship seminar. Unlike the school psychology coursework which is completed on campus, all of the ABA coursework is completed online. Dr. Nicole Davis (n.davis@northeastern.edu) directs Northeastern's ABA programs and can answer additional questions applicants may have about the ABA concentration.

**Tell me more about the Early Intervention (EI) concentration**

The EI concentration prepares students to work with infants and toddlers with or at risk for disabilities and their parents. The concentration involves both hybrid (part online and part on campus) coursework and a 300 hour supervised fieldwork experience in a state approved early intervention program. Given this field experience, students can reduce their hours in school sites during their second year of study. Students who complete the EI concentration earn a certificate in early intervention. This concentration is especially useful for students who

want a greater level of experience with families, with interdisciplinary teams, with infants and toddlers who have difficulty learning, and these children's transition to school at age three. The early intervention program is an interdisciplinary program and is accredited by the MA Department of Public Health. Dr. Karin Lifter (K.Lifter@northeastern.edu) directs the program. She can answer additional questions applicants may have about the EI concentration.

### **Can I complete both the ABA and EI concentrations?**

No, students can pursue either the ABA or the EI concentration.

### **How does an applicant's "fit" with the faculty affect admission to the PhD program?**

In addition to a very strong academic track record, applicants are admitted to the Doctoral Program in School Psychology based upon their interest in school psychology doctoral studies, their previous research and practice experiences, their overall fit with Northeastern's program, and their fit with a school psychology faculty member who shares research interests with the applicant. Applicants are encouraged to describe these factors in their personal statement. It is fine, but not necessary, to reach out to a specific faculty member prior to submitting an application.

### **I have a prior graduate degree in school psychology (EdS or CAGS) or a related field (for example a master's degree in applied psychology, counseling, etc.). What would my course of study look like in the school psychology PhD program?**

Students who enter the doctoral program with previous graduate work in school psychology or a related area develop an individualized program of study with their advisor. The program of study must include at least 50 semester hours of graduate coursework. Additional program requirements include the mentored research project, fieldwork, comprehensive exams, a full time internship and the dissertation.

### **Can you describe the fieldwork opportunities?**

In both the MS/CAGS and PhD programs there are supervised fieldwork requirements in every year of the program. The first year pre-practicum (75 hr) and second year (200 hr—PhD program; 450 hr—MS/CAGS program) practicum are completed in public school settings. The third year of the CAGS program is a full-time (1200 hr) internship. Students are still considered full time during the internship year. While most students complete the entire CAGS internship in a school district, students have the option of completing 600 hours in a non-school (e.g., hospital, agency) setting. In the PhD program, years 3 and 4 include two 600 hr fieldwork experiences. During the first year of AFW, it is expected that students will be placed within a school building under the supervision of a certified school psychologist. During the second year of AFW, students may choose to pursue placements in other educational settings (e.g., district-wide placement, placement in a specialized/therapeutic school). Although it is possible for up to 600 hours to be completed in a non-school setting, students who wish to pursue this in their second year of AFW must receive approval from the program faculty prior to applying to non-school sites. After year 4 in the PhD program, students receive their CAGS in school psychology and are eligible for National Certification in School Psychology and MA state licensure as a school psychologist. The fifth or sixth year of the PhD program is a full time doctoral internship.

### **Are students paid during internship?**

This varies by region of the country. Many school districts (although few in MA) do offer paid internships for specialist (CAGS) students. Northeastern has a HRSA grant that extends through June 2025, which provides students completing their CAGS internships in "high needs" communities in MA with a \$10K stipend. While many students in the program do stay in MA for internship, each year students choose to do their internship outside of MA. In some years, this has been as many as 1/3 of the cohort. Most doctoral internships (year 5) are paid.

### **How many students are in each cohort?**

In the MS/CAGS program, each cohort is approximately 20 students. The PhD program is smaller with cohorts of 4 students. Students in the MS/CAGS and PhD programs take courses together, in fact about half of the courses in the PhD program are shared with the MS/CAGS program. Students in the PhD program take courses with students in the Department's Counseling Psychology PhD program, which is also accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA). In general, class size tends to be about 20-25 students in first year classes, 10-12 students in all fieldwork seminars and all second year classes that have course-based projects completed at students' field sites. Advanced doctoral courses tend to have 5-10 students.

### **What do students do after graduation?**

Most graduates of the MS/CAGS program work in public K-12 school systems as practicing school psychologists. After a minimum number of years of work experience, several of our graduates have become field supervisors for students in the program. Graduates of the PhD program work in a variety of capacities including faculty members teaching full or part-time in university settings, licensed psychologists who work in school and nonschool (e.g., hospital or non-profit) settings, and researchers employed by universities and other institutions. Many graduates of the PhD program engage in research, teaching and practice in a variety of settings. Some of our program graduates hold leadership roles in the field of school psychology. While many of our students stay in MA after graduation, our graduates work all across the US.

### **Who are the school psychology faculty?**

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