



College of Alberta Psychologists

Registration

Criteria for Evaluating Academic Credentials

For applicants who commenced graduate studies
after September 1, 2013

Updated: April 2017

In accordance with the *Psychologists Profession Regulation* the following criteria will be used in evaluating academic credentials of candidates for registration as psychologists in Alberta.

1. Graduate Degree from a Government Authorized/Accredited Institution

The applicant must have obtained a graduate degree in psychology from an accredited institution as set out below:

1.1 Canadian Institutions: the institution must be a government-authorized degree-granting institution of higher education in Canada.

1.2 American Institutions: the institution must be an institution of higher education in the United States that is regionally accredited by the:

Ψ Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools

Ψ New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Ψ Higher Learning Commission (North Central Association of Colleges and Schools)

Ψ Northwest Commission of Colleges and Universities

Ψ Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Ψ Western Association of Schools and Colleges

1.3 Institutions Outside of North America: the institution must be a university in another country that has been authorized by an appropriate authority of that jurisdiction.

2. Credits in Psychology Courses

Once the Credentials Evaluation Sub-Committee (CESC) has determined that the applicant has a degree that is acceptable and is from an accredited institution, the CESC will review the specific courses taken by the applicant to ensure that the applicant has earned the appropriate number of credits in psychology courses.

If the applicant is using coursework from an undergraduate degree to meet the total credit and the substantive content requirements, this coursework must meet the above accreditation standards.

2.1 Number of Credits Required

2.1.1 Thesis-based Graduate Program: If the applicant has obtained a graduate degree in a program where a thesis was required, the applicant must provide evidence of having successfully completed 60 semester credits of psychology coursework, 30 of which must be at the graduate level. The remaining 30 credits can be at the graduate or undergraduate level.

2.1.2 Non Thesis-based Graduate Program: If the applicant has obtained a graduate degree where no thesis was required, the applicant must provide evidence of having successfully completed 72 semester credits of psychology coursework, 36 of which

must be at the graduate level. The remaining 36 semester credits can be at the graduate or undergraduate level.

2.2 Method for Calculating Semester Credits Earned

When calculating the number of semester credits to be applied to each course, the CESC will consider the following:

- 2.2.1 In order to qualify as a three semester credit course, the course must be comprised of 39 hours of instruction.
- 2.2.2 Three quarter credits are considered equivalent to 30 hours of instruction and will be deemed to be equivalent to a two semester credit course. Note: the onus is on the applicant to check with the institution to determine if the coursework is based on the semester or quarter credit system (e.g., in some U.S. Institutions) and to ensure that additional coursework is taken to make up any deficiencies from the quarter credit systems.
- 2.2.3 A thesis or dissertation is not counted as a psychology course.
- 2.2.4 Audited courses will not be accepted.

2.3 Determining Whether Course Content is in Psychology

2.3.1 Before determining whether an applicant may be given semester credit for the courses that are submitted, the CESC must determine that the submitted courses have ***content that relates primarily to psychology***. The CESC may consider all factors that are determined to be relevant, including:

- Ψ The name or title of the course, including whether the course is identified as a psychology course in its prefix (i.e., PSY 401) or in its title (i.e., Psychology of Learning);
- Ψ Whether the course is taught or tutored by a person who has a graduate degree in psychology;
- Ψ The nature and content of the course; and
- Ψ Whether the course is intended to prepare students to engage in the practice of psychology.

2.3.2 ***The CESC may request further information*** from the applicant in order to assess course content, including:

- Ψ an official syllabus;
- Ψ an official letter from the university confirming whether the instructor has a graduate degree in psychology;
- Ψ a list of resource materials required for the course; and

Ψ work samples or papers written by the student.

3. Required Coursework in Core and Substantive Content Areas

3.1 Core Areas

Applicants must have successfully completed three semester credits at the **graduate level** in each of the following core areas: Ethics and Standards, Research Design and Methodology, Assessment and Evaluation, and Intervention and Consultation.

3.1.1 Ethics and Standards

Course must be at the **graduate level** and must be based on the Canadian or American Code of Ethics for Psychologists, including topics such as: informed consent, confidentiality, professional boundaries, limits of competence, record-keeping, advertising practices, research and jurisprudence. In addition, the course must include **at least one** of the following areas:

- Ψ Professional standards and guidelines for the practice of psychology (e.g., Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) Practice Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services, CPA Guidelines for Educational and Psychological Testing, College of Alberta Psychologists Practice Guideline for Release of Confidential Information, or other published guidelines for special populations such as women and minorities). This may include pertinent federal and provincial laws/statutes that affect psychological practice (e.g., laws and regulations relating to family and child protection, education, disabilities, discrimination, duty to warn and privileged communication, commitment and least restrictive care, continuing professional education requirements, practice regulations, licensure regulations); or
- Ψ Ethical decision-making processes in the practice of psychology (e.g., resolution of ethical conflicts, and integration of ethical principles and legal/regulatory requirements);
- Ψ Some graduate programs of study provide instruction in ethics as an integral part of the program instead of as a separate course. In such cases, the applicant must present original official documentation (official letter from the university and/or course syllabi) showing that:
 - The program provided the equivalent of *three semester credits or 39 hours* of instruction in ethics and standards, and
 - The above mentioned course content was covered.

3.1.2 Research Design and Methodology

Course must be at the **graduate level** and must address research design, methodology and interpretation of research findings applicable to the discipline and practice of psychology. Course content must include **at least one** of the following substantive areas:

- Ψ Research methods (e.g., sampling, instrumentation, data collection procedures), appropriateness of instrument selection, issues of research design;
- Ψ Research design (e.g., hypothesis generation; experimental, quasi-experimental and naturalistic inquiry; group designs; single-case research);
- Ψ Appropriate analytical methods (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, descriptive, inferential, univariate, bivariate and multivariate; parametric and nonparametric), which analysis is appropriate, interpretation (e.g., causal vs. correlational, degree and nature of generalizability); or
- Ψ Criteria for critical appraisal and utilization of research (e.g., technical adequacy; limitations to generalizations; threats to internal, external and construct validity and design flaws), integration of qualitative and quantitative results, and use of research.

3.1.3 Assessment and Evaluation

Course must be at the ***graduate level***. The course must address theory and techniques for the measurement of characteristics of individuals, groups or systems. Course content must include ***at least one*** of the following substantive areas:

- Ψ Psychometric theory and concepts (e.g., measurement, reliability, validity, item characteristics, test fairness, standardization, norms) and test validation procedures (e.g., criterion, predictive, construct and content strategies; appropriate measurement standards and legal regulations);
- Ψ Assessment models (e.g., psychometric, behavioural, neuropsychological, ecological);
- Ψ Tests for the measurement of characteristics of individuals (e.g., social, emotional and behavioural functioning; cognitive; achievement; aptitude; personality; neuropsychological; vocational interest) and the adaptation of these tests for use with special populations;
- Ψ Techniques other than tests (e.g., interviews, surveys, naturalistic and structured behavioural observations, history/biographical data, medical evaluations, imaging techniques and laboratory tests) for the measurement of characteristics of individuals;
- Ψ Instruments and methods for the measurement of characteristics of jobs, organizations, educational and other social institutions (e.g., job analysis, job evaluation, needs assessment, organizational diagnosis, ecological assessment);
- Ψ Utilization of various classification systems (e.g., DSM, AAMR, SEC, ICD) for diagnosing client functioning; DSM diagnosis, syndromes, differential diagnosis and diagnostic criteria, for example, epidemiology of associated features of behavioural disorders, base rates of disorders in clinical or demographic populations, comorbidity among behavioural disorders and with medical disorders, comorbidity rates, age ranges affected and associated features;

- Ψ Theory and techniques for the measurement of client changes (e.g., client tracking, patient compliance and progress); and
- Ψ Program planning and evaluation strategies and techniques (e.g., needs assessment, process and implementation evaluation, cost-benefit analysis, public health benefit).

3.1.4 Intervention and Consultation

Course must be at the **graduate level**. The course must address theory, techniques and practices to promote, restore, sustain and/or enhance positive functioning and a sense of well-being in clients. Course content must include **at least one** of the following substantive areas:

- Ψ Intervention-planning process, including matching to appropriate treatment (differential diagnosis), efficacy, outcome data; matching client characteristics and knowledge of efficacy, cost-benefit, outcome research;
- Ψ Theories/practice of intervention (e.g., behavioural, cognitive, cognitive-behavioural approaches; psychodynamic approaches; systems/ecological approaches; humanistic approaches; psychoeducation; time-limited/brief therapy);
- Ψ Treatment techniques/interventions for specific concerns or specific populations (e.g., marital and family, group therapy, crisis intervention, play therapy, feminist therapy, rehabilitation therapy approaches to stress management, remediation and compensation, culturally appropriate treatments and interventions);
- Ψ Psychological interventions and models designed to address larger system functioning, for example, system theories and system interventions (e.g., change of environment; school systems; community interventions; family, job and equipment design; consultation) and organizational interventions (e.g., organizational development, organizational change, performance enhancement/management);
- Ψ Consultation models (e.g., mental health, behavioural, instructional, organizational), processes (e.g., stages, communication skills) and consulting to individuals, groups and organizations;
- Ψ Theories/practice of career development and counselling (e.g., career assessment, career counselling techniques); or
- Ψ Practica (e.g., introductory interviewing practica, advanced interviewing practica, intervention skills practica).

3.2 Substantive Content Areas

Candidates must have successfully completed three semester credits at the **graduate or senior undergraduate level** in **each** of the following substantive content areas: *Biological*

Bases of Behaviour, Cognitive/Affective Bases of Behaviour, Social Bases of Behaviour, and Psychology of the Individual.

Senior undergraduate coursework is defined as coursework that is not introductory in nature or content and typically begins with 3xx or 4xx in the course prefix.

3.2.1 Biological Bases of Behaviour

Course must be at the ***graduate or senior undergraduate level***. The course must address biological influences on behaviour, affect, cognition and development. Course content must include ***at least one*** of the following substantive areas:

- Ψ Physiological correlates/determinants of behaviour and affect (e.g., symptoms of common psychophysiological reactions and syndromes such as hyperventilation, anxiety disorders, depressive disorders, stress reactions, headaches, irritable bowel syndrome);
- Ψ Biological bases of the behaviour and affect associated with acute and chronic illness (e.g., post-stroke depression, diabetes, AIDS, asthma, chemotherapy, fibromyalgia, hypoglycemia, schizophrenia), including knowledge of psychoneuroimmunology;
- Ψ Basic psychopharmacology (e.g., medication effects, side effects, and interactions). Includes knowledge of drug metabolism, drug categories (e.g., anxiolytics, antidepressants, antipsychotics, anticonvulsants), addictive/dependency potential;
- Ψ Genetic transmission (e.g., the relationship of dominant and recessive genes) and its role in understanding disorders and their behavioural, emotional, and psychosocial manifestations (e.g., Duchenne's muscular dystrophy, Huntington's disease, Down syndrome); or
- Ψ Relationship of stress to biological and psychological functioning, with particular reference to lifestyle and lifestyle modification (e.g., cardiac rehabilitation, smoking cessation), psychological reactions to stress, behavioural health, physical or biological reactions to a behaviour (e.g., substance abuse, eating disorders).

3.2.2 Cognitive/Affective Bases of Behaviour

Course must be at the ***graduate or senior undergraduate level***. The course must address cognitive and affective influences on each other, on behaviour and on development. Course content must include ***at least one*** of the following substantive areas:

- Ψ Cognitive science (e.g., sensation and perception, attention, memory, language and spatial skills, intelligence, information processing, problem-solving, strategies for organizing information);
- Ψ Theories of motivation (e.g., need/value approaches, cognitive choice approaches, self-regulation);

- Ψ Theories and principles of learning (e.g. social learning, classical and operant conditioning, primacy/recency effects);
- Ψ Theories of emotions;
- Ψ Reciprocal interrelationships among cognitions/beliefs, behaviour, affect, temperament and mood (e.g., healthy functioning, performance anxiety, performance enhancement, job satisfaction, depression); or
- Ψ Influence of psychosocial factors (e.g., sex differences, family styles and characteristics, academic/occupational success) on beliefs/cognitions and behaviours.

3.2.3 Social Bases of Behaviour

Course must be at the ***graduate or senior undergraduate level***. The course must address social influences on behaviour, affect, cognition and development. Course content must include ***at least one*** of the following substantive areas:

- Ψ Social cognition and perception (e.g., attribution theory and biases, information integration, confirmation bias, person perception, development of stereotypes, racism);
- Ψ Social interaction (e.g., interpersonal relationships, aggression, altruism, attraction);
- Ψ Group dynamics and organizational structures (e.g., school systems, gang behaviour, job satisfaction, family systems, group thinking, cultural behaviour, conformity, compliance, obedience, persuasion), social influences on individual functioning (e.g., job satisfaction, family systems, group thinking, cultural behaviour, conformity, compliance, obedience, persuasion);
- Ψ Environmental/ecological psychology (e.g., person-environment fit, crowding, pollution, noise); or
- Ψ Theories of cultural identity development, acculturation and psychological impact of oppression; within group and between group differences; the role of cultural differences in psychosocial development based on multicultural and multiethnic diversity (e.g., racial/ethnic minorities, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religious groups).

3.2.4 Psychology of the Individual

Course must be at the ***graduate or senior undergraduate level***. The course must address the range and diversity of normal and abnormal human functioning and development. Course content must include ***at least one*** of the following substantive areas:

- Ψ Normal growth and development (cognitive, social, personality, moral, emotional, and physical) from conception through old age;
- Ψ Influence of culture on normative or age-expected behaviours (e.g., normal age range, individual differences); how the definition of normative behaviour is influenced by culture;
- Ψ Risk factors that predict an atypical developmental course (e.g., nutritional deficiencies, health care including prenatal care, availability of social support, adequacy of income and housing, poverty, parental alcohol/drug abuse);
- Ψ Interventions to reduce risk factors (e.g., poor health care, nutritional deficiencies, violence), to increase resilience (e.g., protective factors such as care-giving, increased social support), competence (e.g., skill building) of individuals living in at-risk environments;
- Ψ Life-event changes that can alter the normal course of development (e.g., injury, trauma, illness, onset of chronic disease or disorder in self or parent, death, divorce);
- Ψ Theories of development (e.g., constructivist theory, social learning theory, ecological theory);
- Ψ How psychological development is influenced by the organism-environment interaction over time (e.g., understanding the relationship between the behaviour of the individual and the social, academic or work environment); or
- Ψ Theories of personality that describe behaviour and the etiology of atypical behaviour.

4. Applicants Who Do Not Meet the Above Degree Requirements

Applicants who do not have a graduate degree in psychology may request that the CESC review the applicant's educational credentials to determine whether the graduate degree that has been obtained is equivalent to a graduate degree in psychology.

In determining whether the degree is equivalent, the CESC may consider all factors that are determined to be relevant, including the following:

- 4.1** Whether the degree has been obtained from one of the approved institutions referenced above;
- 4.2** Whether the program from which the applicant graduated is intended to prepare students to engage in the practice of psychology; and
- 4.3** The content of the program, and whether it is similar to the content of a graduate program in psychology.