

## **CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS FOR REGISTRATION AS A PSYCHOLOGIST IN ALBERTA**

The following criteria will be used in evaluating the academic credentials of candidates for registration as psychologists in Alberta.

### **A. GRADUATE TRAINING**

The candidate must have obtained a graduate degree with a major in psychology or a graduate degree with content substantially equivalent to a graduate degree with a major in psychology from:

- A government-approved or government-authorized, degree-granting institution of higher education in Canada, OR
- An institution of higher education in the United States regionally accredited by the:
  1. Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools
  2. New England Association of Schools and Colleges
  3. North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
  4. Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges,
  5. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
  6. Western Association of Schools and Colleges, OR
- A university in another country that has been recognized or authorized by an appropriate authority of that jurisdiction.

### **B. PSYCHOLOGY COURSES**

1) In a program where a thesis was required, the candidate must have successfully completed 60 credits of psychology coursework, 30 of which must be at the graduate level and the remaining 30 credits can be at the graduate or undergraduate level<sup>1</sup>.

2) In a program where no thesis was required, the candidate must have successfully completed 72 credits of psychology coursework, 36 of which must be at the graduate level and the remaining 36 credits can be at the graduate or undergraduate level.

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<sup>1</sup> Any level of undergraduate study (i.e. 100-400 level courses)

- 3) Six credits of coursework are considered equivalent to 78 hours of instruction (or two three-credit courses, each equivalent to 39 hours of instruction).
- 4) A thesis or dissertation is not counted as a psychology course.
- 5) Audited courses will not be accepted.
- 6) A psychology course is defined as a course that:
  - i) Is designated as such in the program's calendar (e.g., Psychology 401, Educational Psychology 401), OR
  - ii) Has an official title that clearly indicates it is psychological in nature (e.g., Psychology of Learning, Psychological Aspects of Rehabilitation), OR
  - iii) Is taught or tutored by a person who has a graduate degree in psychology **AND** is clearly psychological in content. Official documents (e.g., university course calendar) must be provided as evidence of the psychological content of the course and the credentials of the instructor.

## C. GRADUATE COURSEWORK

Applicants must complete one three-credit course in **each** of the following core competency areas:

1. Ethics and standards
2. Research design and methodology
3. Assessment and evaluation
4. Intervention and consultation

### 1. Ethics and Standards

Course content must include at least one of the following areas:

- Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists (or equivalent), including topics such as informed consent, confidentiality, professional boundaries, limits of competence, record-keeping, advertising practices, research and jurisprudence;
- Professional standards and guidelines for the practice of psychology (e.g., CPA Practice Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services, CPA Guidelines for Educational and Psychological Testing, Practice Guidelines for Release of Confidential Information, Practice Guidelines for Addressing Recovered Memories, 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);
- Ethical decision-making processes in the practice of psychology (e.g., resolution of ethical conflicts, and integration of ethical principles and legal/regulatory requirements).

**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<sup>2</sup> showing that:**

- 1. The program provided the equivalent of 3 credits or 39 hours of instruction in Ethics and Standards, AND**
- 2. The above-mentioned course content was covered.**

## **2. Research Design and Methodology**

The course addresses research design, methodology and interpretation of research findings. Course content must include at least one of the following substantive areas:

- Research methods (e.g., sampling, instrumentation, data collection procedures), appropriateness of instrument selection, issues of research design;
- Research design (e.g., hypothesis generation; experimental, quasi-experimental and naturalistic inquiry; group designs; single-case research);
- 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);
- 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.

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<sup>2</sup> Official letter from the University and/or course syllabi

### 3. Assessment and Evaluation

The course addresses 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:

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

#### **4. Intervention and Consultation**

The course addresses 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:

- Intervention-planning process, including matching to appropriate treatment (differential diagnosis), efficacy, outcome data; matching client characteristics and knowledge of efficacy, cost-benefit, outcome research;
- Theories/practice of intervention (e.g., behavioural, cognitive, cognitive-behavioural approaches; psychodynamic approaches; systems/ecological approaches; humanistic approaches; psychoeducation; time-limited/brief therapy);
- 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);
- 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);
- Consultation models (e.g., mental health, behavioural, instructional, organizational), processes (e.g., stages, communication skills) and consulting to individuals, groups and organizations;
- Theories/practice of career development and counselling (e.g., career assessment, career counselling techniques);
- Practica (e.g. introductory interviewing practica, advanced interviewing practica, intervention skills practica).

## D. FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Candidates must have successfully completed 3 graduate or senior<sup>3</sup> undergraduate level credits in **each** of the following substantive content areas:

1. Biological Bases of Behaviour
2. Cognitive/Affective Bases of Behaviour
3. Social Bases of Behaviour
4. Psychology of the Individual

### 1. **Biological Bases of Behaviour**

The course addresses biological influences on behaviour, affect, cognition and development. Course content must include at least one of the following substantive areas:

- Basic neuroscience (e.g., neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, neurochemistry), clinical neuroscience (e.g., brain-behaviour relationships, neurological syndromes and their contribution to cognitive and emotional status and behaviour), organic disorders and their symptoms;
- 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);
- 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;
- 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;
- 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);

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<sup>3</sup> Senior undergraduate coursework is defined as coursework that is not introductory in nature or content and is normally taken in the third and fourth years of undergraduate study (e.g., 300 and 400-level courses).

- 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).

## 2. **Cognitive/Affective Bases of Behaviour**

The course addresses cognitive and affective influences on each other, on behaviour and on development. Course content must include at least one of the following substantive areas:

- Cognitive science (e.g., sensation and perception, attention, memory, language and spatial skills, intelligence, information processing, problem-solving, strategies for organizing information);
- Theories and principles of learning (e.g., social learning, classical and operant conditioning, primacy/recency effects);
- Theories of motivation (e.g., need/value approaches, cognitive choice approaches, self- regulation);
- Theories of emotions;
- Reciprocal interrelationships among cognitions/beliefs, behaviour, affect, temperament and mood (e.g., healthy functioning, performance anxiety, performance enhancement, job satisfaction, depression);
- Influence of psychosocial factors (e.g., sex differences, family styles and characteristics, academic/occupational success) on beliefs/cognitions and behaviours

## 3. **Social Bases of Behaviour**

The course addresses social influences on behaviour, affect, cognition and development. Course content must include at least one of the following substantive areas:

- Social cognition and perception (e.g., attribution theory and biases, information integration, confirmation bias, person perception, development of stereotypes, racism);
- Social interaction (e.g., interpersonal relationships, aggression, altruism, attraction);

- 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);
- Environmental/ecological psychology (e.g., person-environment fit, crowding, pollution, noise);
- Theories of personality that describe behaviour and the etiology of atypical behaviour, including knowledge of limitations in existing theories for understanding the effect of diversity (e.g., age, ethnicity, gender);
- 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).

#### 4. **Psychology of the Individual**

The course addresses the range and diversity of normal and abnormal human functioning and development. Course content must include at least one of the following substantive areas:

- Normal growth and development (cognitive, social, personality, moral, emotional, and physical) from conception through old age;
- 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;
- 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);
- 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;
- 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);

- Theories of development (e.g., constructivist theory, social learning theory, ecological theory);
- 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);
- Family systems functioning and family stages in life, and how these impact on individual psychological development (e.g., family life cycle, parent-adolescent communication, birth of a child).

The description of each of the required content areas draws heavily on the following source:

**Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB), "Information for Candidates (2008) – Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology."**  
[www.asppb.org/publications/pdf/IFC.pdf](http://www.asppb.org/publications/pdf/IFC.pdf)