

Master of Science in Psychology: General Experimental Psychology



The Department of Psychology at Western offers graduate work leading to the Master of Science degree in General Experimental Psychology. The program is designed to prepare graduate students for continuation to the doctorate level or other professional training, or for immediate employment in government, industry or community college teaching. The program accommodates individual career objectives by providing a variety of specialty fields (e.g., neuroscience, gerontology, cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, social psychology and industrial/organizational psychology). One distinctive feature of the program includes individualized mentoring and independent research with faculty members, and a major emphasis is placed on the development of student proficiency in statistical research and methods design in order to enhance critical thinking skills applicable to both employment and educational settings.

Admission Requirements

To apply for graduate study in Psychology at Western Illinois University, all prospective students must complete application forms from the School of Graduate Studies and meet minimum admission standards. Students are encouraged to apply online at wiu.edu/grad. Furthermore, applicants must submit official transcripts of all prior academic work, scores on the general aptitude portion of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), three letters of recommendation and a brief autobiographical statement (which includes a description of future career plans). To be eligible for consideration for admission, the applicant should have a cumulative undergraduate grade point average of 2.75 or greater and a minimum of 15 semester hours (SH) of psychology coursework completed from an accredited institution, including courses in introductory psychology and statistics/research methods.

Degree Requirements

A total of 37 SH of graduate credits are required for the Master of Science (MS) degree in General Experimental Psychology, and it typically takes two years for a student to complete the degree. Most graduate courses are delivered using a seminar format in which faculty and students interact through discussion-based and problem-solving forms of discourse. All graduate courses have a maximum enrollment of 15 students, which facilitates close communication and intellectual stimulation among participants. Students are required to complete courses in research methods and statistics. Additional coursework includes lifespan development, social bases of behavior, advanced cognitive processes and a neuroscience lab. Besides coursework, all students completing

this degree are required to complete a master's thesis project and to pass a final oral examination based on their thesis. The topic of the thesis should be chosen from the candidate's field of interest and should demonstrate a capacity to carry out independent research.

Distinctive Features

Since research experience is crucial for success in both doctoral programs and professional employment, students begin developing their own research projects as soon as they begin the program. Students are encouraged to join a faculty research lab in order to cultivate a mentorship with a faculty member. The program coordinator works together with each student and their faculty mentor to devise an appropriate degree plan. Feedback from both students and faculty has consistently indicated the individualized approach is one of the most well-liked aspects of the program.

Faculty Expertise

The General Experimental Psychology Program is served by full-time, doctoral-level faculty who are tenured or tenure-track. Faculty areas of specialization include cognitive psychology, developmental psychology/gerontology, forensic psychology, health psychology, industrial/organizational psychology, neuroscience, quantitative psychology, psychopharmacology and social/personality psychology. The Experimental Psychology faculty at Western offer teaching and research skills in an exceptionally wide variety of subfields, allowing student research options to be diverse and open to many opportunities for collaboration among faculty within and between various subfields.

Program Location:
Macomb

Contact Information

Questions about the program:
Department of Psychology
Professor David Lane, General
Experimental Psychology Program
coordinator
(309) 298-1593
DJ-Lane@wiu.edu
wiu.edu/experimentalpsychology

General admission questions:
School of Graduate Studies
(309) 298-1806 or (877) WIU GRAD
Grad-Office@wiu.edu
wiu.edu/grad

*Higher Values in
Higher Education*

Academic Excellence
Educational Opportunity
Personal Growth
Social Responsibility



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Facilities

Laboratory, office and seminar space is located on the first floor and in the basement of Waggoner Hall. Departmental equipment that is available to graduate students includes the use of environmental rooms, video recorders, personal computers, psychophysiological recording equipment, online data acquisition equipment, wireless Internet access and access to full text content for all APA journals. The newly remodeled Neuroscience Research Facility contains stereotaxic surgery and histology equipment, modern behavioral testing facilities, an extensively-equipped carpentry shop and a small animal breeding facility. Operation of the facility is overseen by a full-time research technician.

Assistantship Opportunities

The WIU Department of Psychology offers graduate assistantships on a competitive basis for qualified applicants. The graduate assistantships, which include a tuition waiver and monthly stipend, require 13 hours of employment per week as a graduate assistant.

Western Illinois University is an Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity employer with a strong commitment to diversity. In that spirit, we are particularly interested in receiving applications from a broad spectrum of people, including, but not limited to, minorities, women and individuals with disabilities. WIU has a non-discrimination policy that includes sex, race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability and veteran status.



Career Opportunities

The MS in General Experimental Psychology degree program is designed for students interested in pursuing academic careers, as well as those seeking careers in applied and research settings. Doctoral programs often prefer students with the training and experience provided by the MS degree program. Approximately half of the students completing the MS degree program enter doctoral programs throughout the country. The program coordinator and faculty members actively guide and assist students in doctoral program selection and/or job placement. Of those graduates who elected not to pursue a doctoral degree, the majority hold positions that make use of their training in psychology, including positions at community colleges, laboratories using behavioral and physiological research methodologies, social service agencies, business, industry and government.



"The statistics and research experience I received at WIU placed me far above my doctoral-student peers."

*— Dr. Renee Countryman, MS, 2001
Psychology Department Chair,
Austin College, Sherman, TX*