

Master of Science in Applied Psychology

Institution name: East Central University

Official Degree Designation and Program Title: Master of Science in Applied Psychology

Location(s) where program will be offered: Ada, OK Campus of ECU

Method of Delivery: Both Traditional and Online

Contact Information

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Are you the Chief Academic Officer?

JUSTIFICATION OR PROGRAM

Description of Proposed Program

The proposed Master of Science in Applied Psychology will be a 30-hour blended format program (traditional and online) that will serve a diverse range of students who have an interest in an advanced psychology degree that differs from a desire to become a counselor. This program will focus on developing enhanced skills in various psychological topics along with research design, data analysis, and critical thinking skills. The curriculum will prepare students to work in various industries, achieve advancement in their current profession, or prepare them for further graduate education at the doctoral level. The design of the curriculum allows students to customize their focus so that they can obtain the psychology knowledge base and research skills that best suits their interests and future aspirations. The MSAP will be a 30-hour program split into 12 hours in Psychological Foundations, 9 Hours of Research Foundations, followed by 9 hours of Electives.

Objectives of the program include: 1) Demonstrating familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, and research orientated nature of psychology; 2) Develop skills regarding basic psychological research, including data analysis, critical evaluation, and research design; 3) Demonstration and application of psychological principles to personal, social, developmental, cultural, and organizational issues; 4) Develop skills to communicate effectively on both the written and oral communication levels; 5) Be able to implement their psychological knowledge, skills, and values in various occupational settings and pursuits.

Employment Demand for Proposed Program

In general, a master's degree of this type in psychology is in demand by three types of students. First, would be students who are specifically interested in obtaining a masters degree in psychology in an applied/research focused area. Secondly, given that the applied area of psychology requires few specific undergraduate course pre-requisites, such a degree would be in demand by a wide-range of undergraduate majors that are not necessarily psychology focused. Lastly, given that more advanced

degrees in psychology (i.e., doctoral level degrees) typically require a background in experimental psychology (e.g., research design & statistics), students interested in furthering their education at the doctoral level will find that this type of program better prepares them for and makes them more competitive for admittance to a program at the doctoral level. Indeed, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a master's degree in psychology that focuses on these research-oriented areas is increasingly valued by doctoral programs in psychology.

In terms of specific employment opportunities, it is projected overall that the employment of psychologists outside the area of counseling will grow approximately by 7 percent from 2023 to 2033, an average that is faster than the average for all occupations. On average, about 13,000 openings for psychologists are projected each year over the next decade. Many of these openings are expected to result from the need to replace workers who transfer to different occupations or exit the labor force (e.g., through retirement; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). While that growth includes all areas of psychology, growth in psychology related jobs outside the area of the counseling are expected to increase by 5%, going from 56,600 to 59,400 over the next decade. Given the versatility of this degree, it is also important to consider jobs outside the specific area of psychology, and includes areas of professional, scientific, and technical services. In these areas, there is an expected growth of 9.3% over the next decade (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). Similarly, jobs that specifically function to service scientific research and development are expected to grow by 9.4% over the next decade. While this includes the more general areas of scientific research, areas related specifically to the areas of social sciences and the humanities in regards to research & development are expected to grow by 6.5% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). Given the versatility of this degree, job opportunities covered by this degree will include areas related to psychology specifically and then more generally in the following areas: instructional design, research, teaching, marketing and sales, program development and management, social media coordination, case management, healthcare administration, mental and behavioral health services, public or private institution support, human resources manager, educational guidance, and career counselor/advisor.

Unmet Need for Proposed Program

Currently, based on exit survey data, a consistent percentage (10 to 15%) of our undergraduate students are interested in obtaining a Master's Degree in Psychology that does not involve a counseling focus. These are typically students who are interested in the research/applied focus of psychology and are often students considering pursuing a Doctoral Level Program. Similarly, advisors in our program report that students consistently demonstrate an interest in a program that is shorter in duration (i.e., 30 hours), but that will still meet their need of an advanced degree that allows them to obtain future aspirations (e.g., career advancement in their current job; acceptance into a doctoral level program; working in an applied area of psychology). Lastly, ECU does not currently offer a Master's level program that is a research focused degree built around the development of skills relating to research design and statistical analysis. Given that this degree will be accessible to students from multiple educational areas of interest and backgrounds, it will fill a need at the university level for a graduate level program with a research design and implementation focus.