Brief Program Description
Administered by the Department of Student Development, the graduate licensure programs in School Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst prepare professional school psychologists who are oriented toward working effectively with others in the identification, analysis and resolution of social and educational problems involving school age children and adolescents. Our programs emphasize a contemporary scientist practitioner approach to school psychology featuring both prevention and intervention-oriented problem solving approaches to professional practice.

Who May Apply
Typically, students enter with a bachelor’s degree and a background in psychology, education, and/or special education; however, it is not unusual for applicants to hold master’s degrees in related fields.

Admission Process and Criteria
Admission to the program in School Psychology is competitive. That is, many more applications are received than there are available positions. Approximately ten students are admitted each year from a pool of 100 to 120 applications.

Candidates may apply online through the Graduate School. The yearly application deadline is January 15 for admission the following September. Candidates for admission will be evaluated on GPA, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, previous related experience, fit with the School Psychology program, and a well-written personal statement. Candidates interested in the School Psychology program are strongly urged to read all program material and to visit the campus to meet with program faculty and students.

Program of Study
Professional development in the School Psychology program is grounded thoroughly in individual, systemic, and principles of human behavior and development, as well as theories of learning and instruction. Students develop the skills necessary to assess academic and social development within specific contexts such as families, schools, and communities. They learn to plan, implement and evaluate contextually sensitive intervention and prevention programs that enable them to consult and support the child rearing and instructional efforts of families, teachers and related school personnel.

Emphasis is placed on understanding and analyzing problems at both a general and individual level. However, each individual problem situation is considered unique with respect to its background information, the personal characteristics of the parties involved (e.g. gender, cultural heritage), and the expectations for resolution.

School Psychology students at the University of Massachusetts are trained to be scientists and practitioners. Embedded in this model is the use of scientific methods, valid assessments and intervention strategies used to prevent and resolve problems. Interventions are treated as plausible hypotheses that must be evaluated continuously as part of service provision. Each School Psychology student's course of study is individualized to allow development of special expertise and interests. In addition to required research, practicum, and internship activities, all School Psychology students take coursework from within the following domains: Historical and Educational Foundations of School Psychology; Psychometrics, Assessment and Research Methods; Empirically Valid School-based Intervention and Consultation; and Professional School Psychology.

Typically, students take coursework from faculty across the College of Education’s programs (e.g., Early Childhood Education, Special Education, School Counseling, Social Justice Education, and Research in Educational Methods) and from other Departments outside the College (e.g., Psychology, Sociology). The School Psychology program offers a Ph.D. program (110 semester hour credits minimum), and a Master’s/ Education Specialist degree program (64 semester credit hours minimum). A doctoral program of study typically takes 4 to 5 years to complete, not including a 1-year internship experience. A Master’s/Ed.S. program of study typically takes 3 years, including a 1-year internship experience. Professional practitioners who already have a Master’s degree and wish to pursue a School Psychology credential can do so through application, admission, and matriculation through the Master’s/Ed.S. program on an individualized basis.
Advising
Upon formal acceptance into the program, students are assigned advisors who help develop initial programs of study and research interests. Students may change advisors during their course of study if they find that their research interests are more closely aligned with another member of the faculty.

Career Opportunities and Job Placement
Faculty assist students in selecting appropriate practicum and internship placements that will help prepare them for their careers. Faculty also advise students regarding potential career opportunities. Well-trained school psychologists are in high demand in public schools throughout the country. Graduates of the School Psychology Program at both the Ed.S. and/or doctoral level have been highly successful in finding professional employment.

Program Special Information
The University of Massachusetts Amherst’s Ph.D. Program in School Psychology is one of only four such doctoral programs in the New England region that is accredited by the American Psychological Association. The Ph.D. and M.Ed./Ed.S. programs are approved by the National Association of School Psychologists and the Massachusetts State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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