



Thank you for your interest in Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Washington. Below are answers to many of the common questions we are frequently asked.

What Is the Difference Between a Psychiatrist and a Psychologist?

The most significant difference is medical school. Psychiatrists are medical doctors who have completed medical school and have trained in a residency program to become board certified in psychiatry. Psychiatrists can prescribe psychopharmacological medications and tend to have a more biologic and neurologic approach to mental health.

In general, clinical psychologists have either a PhD or PsyD from a university or professional institute, post-doctoral clinical experience, and have passed a licensing exam. Psychologists usually have more research training and experience than psychiatrists, but do not have the thorough, practical training in biology. Since they are not medical doctors, they cannot prescribe medication. Psychologists generally have a more behavioral/cognitive approach to psychopathology and mental health, along with more intense training in psychotherapy.

Do I Need To Have an Undergraduate Degree In Psychology to be a Psychiatrist or Psychologist?

While a good foundation in psychology would be helpful for a career in psychiatry, many residents and attendings have received undergraduate and graduate degrees in other fields. Because they must attend medical school, many have backgrounds in science. Since psychiatrists are often considered more interdisciplinary than many other medical fields, backgrounds in humanities or social sciences are also common.

Psychologists, however, often require a much more extensive background in psychology before graduate school. This does not necessarily require a bachelor's degree in psychology, but most graduate schools will require a certain number of prerequisites in psychology, at least equivalent to a minor.

Many advisors recommend that a student receives a bachelor's degree in a field that will interest them. Graduate schools, as well as other professional programs, often look for diversity in their applicants. However, students should research their career paths carefully as not all undergraduate degrees are appropriate for all graduate programs.

What Is the Process of Becoming a Psychologist?

A psychologist does not attend medical school; instead, they apply to graduate school and choose a focus, such as clinical psychology or behavioral neuroscience. For more information on the UW Psychology program, please visit <http://www.psych.uw.edu/>.

What Is the Process of Becoming a Psychiatrist?

A psychiatrist must attend medical school. Generally, medical school graduates will begin to search for a residency program in their final year of medical school. There are many programs to choose from, of which Psychiatry is one. The [Psychiatry Residency Training Program](#) here at the UW is a four year track, in which medical students will become functioning medical practitioners. Upon completion of the residency program, graduates are eligible to sit for the boards and become a licensed psychiatrist!

Once your Psychiatry Residency is complete, there are different fellowship opportunities that provide accreditation in Addictions, Forensics, and many other tracks.

Again, thank you for your interest in the University of Washington Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. Please look through the links provided for more specific information. We recommend the following websites for additional information:

<http://www.apa.org/>

<http://www.psych.org/>

<http://www.aoa-net.org/>

<http://www.uwpsychres.org/>

<http://www.washington.edu/medical/>