

Graduate Program Description

The Clinical Counseling curriculum is designed to prepare you to deliver clinical service upon graduation. Our students receive training in the identification and treatment of a broad range of mental and nervous disorders. A variety of assessment and intervention approaches are covered with an emphasis on empirically supported techniques.

Our graduates are well-prepared clinicians and consumers of the research literature. The training ensures the development of broad-based clinical skills and encourages close, cooperative work with other healthcare specialists such as physicians, other mental health professionals and allied health professionals. Graduates meet the educational requirements for licensure as a professional counselor in Illinois and many, if not all, other states.

Students who wish to improve their chances of admission to doctoral programs in psychology may wish to pursue the Research Track in the Clinical Counseling program. This course of study provides additional experiences in research-related coursework and application of research skills in addition to the clinical service delivery curriculum.

Personal Statement/Essay Instructions

Please attach a personal statement that discusses your academic objectives and any additional information you feel is relevant to your application. You should use this essay as an opportunity to express why your background and clinical and research objectives make you a strong candidate for our psychology program. Please also describe how you could contribute to ongoing research efforts in the department by discussing your area(s) of research interest. Finally, identify which of the following faculty members would benefit you most as your mentor: Dr. Scot Hill, Dr. John Calamari, Dr. David Kosson, Dr. Steven Miller, Dr. Rachel Greenly, Dr. Kristen Schneider.

Works Cited

“Psychology: Clinical Counseling (MS).” *Rosalind Franklin University*, www.rosalindfranklin.edu/academics/college-of-health-professions/degree-programs/psychology-clinical-counseling-ms/.

With a desire to become more involved in research, I completed an independent study through which I conducted a literature review in the field of cognitive psychology - examining the effects of peripheral distractors on task performance. This review ultimately led to my honors thesis, which examined the effects of unconscious shifts of attention in arithmetic cognition under the direction of Dr. Barbara Rutherford. In this project, I conducted an entire research experiment from conception to data analysis to writing up the findings, which I presented to the Psychology Department and public at large at my university and as a poster at the Undergraduate Neuroscience Conference at the University of Alberta. The project required the development of appropriate stimuli, and creation of a computer program using Inquisit software for consistent stimulus presentation and accurate response collection. My study used a novel procedure to test cognitive operations in mental arithmetic and found that reflexive attention does not play an active role in arithmetic cognition. During the several months spent preparing for my thesis, I developed strong critical thinking and research skills that have prepared me well for the rigors of graduate school.

After completing my Bachelor of Science, I worked as a Research Intern at the Centre for Cognitive Development, UBC, under the supervision of Dr. Carolyn Bear and Dr. Darko Odic on an independent project measuring approximate number system acuity and confidence acuity in relation to children's math ability. During my time there, I researched literature related to cognitive development, interviewed parents and siblings for data collection, administered tests to children, analyzed data using the software package R, and presented my findings at lab meetings. Furthermore, at the end of my internship, I submitted an abstract to present a poster at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, held in Baltimore, MD, USA. The opportunity to work directly with children and their parents allowed me to realize that my strongest research interests lie in adults and aged populations. I found myself both very interested in studying human mental processes, including their function in relation to behavior, and the impact of having deficits in these cognitive processes. Therefore, for my graduate studies, I would like to pursue research on the cognitive effects of neurological illness or brain injury. More specifically, I am keen to study age-associated cognitive disorders, cognitive rehabilitation and preventative strategies.

My recent clinical experience working as a Behavioral Interventionist for BC Autism, Vancouver, was a major influence on my decision to pursue a clinical psychology degree. Here I provide instructional and behavioral support to a child who has a unique combination of conditions, including both autism and a rare genetic condition known as Coffin-Siris syndrome. This job allowed me to discover that I also have an affinity for, and a strong desire to provide intervention and support to individuals with special needs.

I am attracted to Rosalind Franklin University's program in clinical psychology because of its excellent reputation in both research and clinical and my interest in the work of Dr. Scot Hill, and Dr. David Kosson. I want to work with Dr. Hill to expand my understanding and practical implementation of genotype analyses, neuroimaging, and neuropsychological testing techniques to assess cognition. In addition, I am interested in Dr. Hill's ongoing research investigating working memory deficits using a combination of neuropsychological, genetic and electroencephalographic methods. I believe Dr. Hill's extensive educational background in Clinical Neuropsychology in a variety of settings such as hospitals and medical schools will allow me to develop the specialized research and clinical skills necessary to become a board-certified clinical neuropsychologist. Also, I am interested in Dr. Kosson's research investigating the mechanisms that underlie psychopath's cognitive and emotional deficits. Specifically, I am interested in two of Dr. Kosson's projects, Neural substrate of cognitive and emotional deficits in psychopathy and Emotion regulation deficits associated with early trauma among low income,

minority preschoolers. I would be excited to have either faculty members serve as my mentor but would work with another faculty member if these three researchers were not available. Furthermore, my previous research experiences, specializing in cognitive topics (i.e., the relationship between attentional capture and cognitive deficits in the development of novel approaches that can be implemented to clinical settings to better understand and assess neuropsychological conditions) and in neuroimaging techniques (i.e., the use of neuroimaging technology in diagnosis of familial frontotemporal dementia) provides me with a strong background for research in the field.

Brionne McWilliams

Contact Information

Address: Department of Psychology
University of British Columbia
#304-1600 Howe St, Vancouver BC V6Z2L9
Phone: 604-355-5115
E-mail: Brionne_9@hotmail.com
Citizenship: Canada, United States of America

Education

B.Sc. Psychology (Sept 2014 - June 2018)
The University of British Columbia's Okanagan Campus
Bachelor of Science, Honours, Psychology. Overall GPA: 3.30/4.33 scale, Psychology GPA: 4.00

Honours Thesis: *The Effects of Unconscious Shifts of Attention Across the Mental Processing of Addition and Subtraction*

Supervisor: Dr. Barbara Rutherford

Research Experience

Volunteer Research Assistant (Sept 2018 – Present)
Centre for Brain Health, University of British Columbia

Responsibilities: I assist Dr. Robin Hsiung and Dr. Dana Wittenberg in a research project investigating neuropsychological characteristics of frontotemporal dementia. Duties include conducting a literature review, and manuscript preparation.

Research Intern (May 2018 – Sept 2018)
Department of Psychology, University of British Columbia

Responsibilities: I worked under the supervision of Dr. Carolyn Bear and Dr. Darko Odic in a research project measuring approximate number system acuity and confidence acuity in children's math ability. Responsibilities included managing data collection and test administration for the collection of data for a dissertation, facilitating the recruitment of children and their parents via phone and email, analyzing data using the software package R, and presenting the findings at lab meetings.

Honours Student (Aug 2017 – July 2018)
Department of Psychology, University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus

Responsibilities: Under the supervision of Dr. Barbara Rutherford, I developed and proposed an undergraduate honours thesis examining the effects of unconscious shifts of attention across the mental processing of addition and subtraction. I also coded the experimental managed data collection and test administration in Dr. Rutherford's lab.

Directed Studies (Jan 2017 – Apr 2017)
Department of Psychology, University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus

Responsibilities: Conducted a 16-page literature review on the effects of vertical location and brightness of a distractor on task performance.

Research Assistant (Sept 2016 – Dec 2017)
Department of Psychology, University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus

Responsibilities: Under the supervision of Dr. Stephen Porter and his honours forensic specialization student Nina Gregoire, I collected and coded data, ran participants and conducted a literature review investigating the various ways criminals portray themselves on an online dating platform.

Oral Presentations

McWilliams, B., Bear, C., Odic, D. (2018). *The Role of Number Sense Certainty in Formal and Informal Math Abilities*. Presentation at the University of British Columbia Vancouver and Early Development Research Group.

McWilliams, B., Rutherford, B. (2018). *The Effects of Distractor Location on Reflexive Attention During Arithmetic Processing*. Presentation at the University of British Columbia Vancouver Psychology Department and public-at-large.

Poster Presentations

McWilliams, B., Bear, C., Odic, D. (anticipated, March 2019). *The Role of Number Sense Certainty in Formal and Informal Math Abilities*. Poster to be presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Baltimore, MD.

McWilliams, B., Rutherford, B. (July 2018). *Shifts of Spatial Attention During Arithmetic Processing*. Poster presented at the Undergraduate Neuroscience Conference at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB.

Professional Experience

Behavioral Internist (Aug 2018 – Present)

BC Autism - Ministry of Children and Family Development, Vancouver, BC

Responsibilities: Provide instructional and behavioral support to a child with autism and Coffin-Siris syndrome.

Teaching Experience

Peer-Tutor, Introduction to Data Analysis PSYO 271 (Jan 2017 – Apr 2017)

The University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus

Responsibilities: Tutored students for test preparation in statistics, helped students with weekly homework assignments, and held weekly office hours.

Professional Affiliations

Student Affiliate of the Association for Psychological Science (February 2019- Present)

Member of Women in Cognitive Science – Canada (February 2019- Present)

Student member of the Association of Black Psychologists (Nov 2018 – Present)

Campus Involvement

Vice President of Administration (Sept 2016 – Apr 2017)

The University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus, Pre-Med Club

Responsibilities: Actively advised and informed incoming students of the various ways to enhance medical school applications; attended regular meetings.

Reference Request: Dr. Zachary Walsh (Psychology Associate Professor)

<in progress>

Dear Dr. Walsh,

Thank you for agreeing to be one of my recommenders. I have decided to apply clinical counselling psychology master's programs, and I am very grateful for your help.

I have enclosed a spreadsheet which lists the following for each school:

- Due date of application
- Type of recommendation letter specified

Just to jog your memory, I was a student in your Drugs and Behavior class and received an overall grade of 92%. In addition, I did do some volunteering with Michelle Thiessen to help create her online survey for cannabis and pain study.

I have also included my C.V. and transcript which summarizes all of my relevant experience in psychology. Lastly, I included a draft of my statement of intent and CIHR research proposal to allow you to get a sense of my research interests. All of the programs to which I am applying have a strong research emphasis.

I would appreciate if you would highlight my motivation/work ethic, intellectual ability, and knowledge base

If you have any questions or need any more information, just let me know!

Again, thank you!

Sincerely,
Brionne McWilliams

Reference Request: Dr. Barbara Rutherford (Honours Supervisor for Senior Psychology Thesis)

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Reference Request: Dr. Darko Odic (Supervisor for Summer Psychology Research Internship)

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