

# Psychology News

JMU Undergraduate Program  
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## The Psychology Major - More than just Classes

***Peer Advisors offer a general outline of academics and opportunities in psychology that apply to each undergraduate level***

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Welcome back students! Are you ready to get back into the swing of things for this upcoming semester? Are you stressed out? This article can help. It provides an outline of classes and extra-curricular activities that correspond to your class level. It describes activities that can complement the psychology major, including community service projects, research projects and other opportunities for freshman through seniors.







### First and Second Year

The Psychology major begins with common core courses that everyone takes, but you can develop a track that is specific to your interests through electives and involvement in activities and research. During your first two years, you should begin to explore the fields of psychology through the lower level electives. This is also a good time to think about complementing your psychology major with a minor. Some minors that psychology majors often choose include Family Issues, Human Resource Development, Criminal Justice, or a foreign language; however, virtually any minor offered at JMU may be perfect for your unique interests. Getting involved within the School of Psychology can be one of the most rewarding aspects of being a psychology major. The Psychology Club sponsors professional, educational, and social activities to enhance your undergraduate career in psychology. This is a wonderful way to meet and interact with both students and faculty within the major. Membership is open to all students with an interest in the field of psychology. Applications and information are available at the Psychology Club bulletin board on the first floor of Johnston Hall. Another great way to get involved is through volunteer work. There are numerous opportunities all over campus and in the surrounding community from which you can choose. Many Psychology Majors have worked for Mercy House, Boys & Girls Club, Valley AIDS Network, worked as tutors or assisted in local school classrooms through programs offered by JMU's Office of Community Service Learning located in Wilson Hall 204. The School of Psychology has many research opportunities that allow first and second year students to get involved. PSYC 290, research assistance, is a 1 to 3 credit course in which individuals assist a professor with a variety of tasks that can include surveying literature, conducting surveys, compiling information, and coding data. There is a minimum 40-clock hour requirement per semester (2-3 hours per

week). This is an excellent opportunity to become better acquainted with a professor and conduct research in an area of interest. Sophomores may join Psi Chi, the National Honor Society in Psychology. Membership requirements include completion of at least 40 hours of college course work, including nine hours in psychology. You must also meet minimum GPA requirements. As a group, Psi Chi members participate in community service such as the Mercy House food drive or the Relay for Life, and have the opportunity to socialize with each other and faculty at luncheons and the annual Halloween Ball. Psi Chi is a well-recognized, prestigious organization and a perfect way to get involved with the School of Psychology.










At the beginning of spring semester, Peer Advising accepts applications from sophomores who want to train and serve as Peer Advisors during junior and senior years. This group of psychology majors provides valuable services to both students and faculty. They serve as ambassadors of psychology to prospective students and future psychology majors. They provide information to students on course syllabi, graduate schools, GREs, and careers. They can assist students as they select and schedule classes. Peer Advisors are trained during their junior year and continue to serve as Peer Advisors through senior year. Students earn 2 credit hours per semester for this training and service. This organization provides a wonderful opportunity to form valuable relationships with psychology students and faculty, as well as to be up-to-date on information regarding the psychology major and related fields.

**During your FIRST & SECOND years strive to complete:**

-  General Education Courses
-  Bachelor's Degree Courses
-  Psyc 101, Math 220
-  Psyc 210, 211
-  Lower-Level Electives
-  Begin your minor (if you have one)

**Remember Your Required BS-Science Course!**

If you are working towards a B.S. degree in Psychology, you must complete a 3 to 4 credit science course in addition to General Education and Psychology Major requirements. This course may be any course from any of the following departments:

-  Biology
-  Chemistry
-  Geology
-  Physics
-  Economics
-  Geography
-  Political Science
-  Sociology
-  Anthropology

This course must be in addition to any courses taken for General Education credit, but the course may be a General Education course. The course can double count for both a minor or second major program. Psychology courses can't be used as a B.S. science course. Psyc 210 and 211 will satisfy the B.S. Math requirement.

## Junior Year

Your junior year is the time to make choices regarding your career directions. You have many opportunities to choose which courses you wish to take. As you do, you should explore career directions as you take courses and participate in special activities such as Psychology Club, Psi Chi, Peer Advising, serve as a volunteer, or earn credit for independent study. If interested in doing a field placement, you need to apply a full semester in advance, perhaps during junior year. Field Placements involve students in community programs or in business. The class counts for capstone credit. It meets once a week on campus, but most of your time is spent at the placement site. Information about potential Field Placement sites is available in the Peer Advising Office or on the web at <http://cep.jmu.edu/ugpsyc>. Second semester juniors who have a cumulative GPA of 3.25 or higher can complete an honors thesis. A thesis allows you to pursue your own research interests under the supervision of a faculty panel. You earn 6 credit hours when you complete an honors thesis including credit for a capstone course and one 400-level elective. If you choose to complete an Honors Thesis you must select your committee members, consisting of a thesis advisor and two faculty readers, by the fourth block of your junior year. Applications are available in the Honors Office in Hillcrest House, as well as in the Peer Advising Office. Many Psychology majors and seniors complete Psyc 402, Independent Study. Psyc 402 is a step up from research assistance (Psyc 290), and generally requires the completion of PSYC 210 and 211. Students may work individually or with a group on all phases of research including reviewing background literature, designing a study, collecting data, analyzing data, and interpreting findings. Students sometimes help faculty with presenting at professional meetings or help write journal articles. PSYC 402 course-work can also be in the form of service-learning oriented experiences. Some examples include Mercy House Shelter where students work with homeless members of the community; Challenging Horizons, a program for middle school students diagnosed with ADHD; and Harrisonburg Young Achievers, an Afrocentric curriculum that builds leadership skills and positive self-concept in middle school students. Some students enrolled in Psyc 402 serve as teaching assistants, others work as interns at the Counseling and Student Development Center.

If your career path will require graduate school, junior year is the time to begin looking for potential institutions, studying and planning for the GREs, and starting to write your resume. To register for the GREs and benefit from practice tests and other useful information, visit the Educational Testing Service's website at <http://www.gre.org/>. The JMU Office of Academic Advising and Career Development, on the third floor of Wilson Hall, is available to help with career planning and resumé writing.

**During your JUNIOR year strive to complete:**

- 2 Area A courses
- 2 Area B courses
- All General Education and Bachelor's Degree requirements

**Continue to make progress on minor requirements (if you have a minor)**

## Senior Year

Senior year is the time to complete things. Review your transcript to make sure that you have finished all course requirements including General Education, Psychology major, minor, and bachelor's degree requirements. Make sure that you will complete 120 credit hours, at least 60 of which must be at a 4-year school. Your overall GPA and GPA in your major and minor must be at least 2.0. It is a good idea to schedule an appointment with your advisor and come into the Peer Advising Office with your transcript to have someone else double-check that you meet all requirements. The JMU Records Office will not notify you if you have a deficiency until weeks or months after you file a graduation application during your final semester. As a senior you should be involved with your major, not only to expand your resumé, but also to enhance the scope of your experiences here at JMU. If you haven't already been involved with the activities recommended for Freshmen, Sophomores, and Juniors above, begin now! Find a way to work closely with professors and other professionals to enhance your skills and experience. During your senior year you should create or update your resume. If you plan to pursue a job right after graduation you need to create a resumé that is suitable for the type of job you will be seeking. For help with your resumé visit the Academic Advising and Career Development Center in Wilson Hall Room 301. You can post your resumé online and look at profiles of hiring employers. Visit Sonner Hall to get employment information. Each year JMU holds job fairs and formal interviews are scheduled through the university for all majors. Send potential employers a letter with your resumé and pursue an interview. You can receive help and practice your interviewing skills at the Career Development Center in Wilson 301. Interviewing is something that is inevitable, whether you are applying for a job or graduate school. Sharpening your skills will help you to become more comfortable with the process. If you intend to apply to graduate school immediately after graduation you will need to identify appropriate programs, collect information and applications, and take the GRE's or other required entrance exams. When applying to graduate programs be sure to stay organized, because deadlines for programs vary and it can be very confusing. Solicit letters of recommendation from your professors and supervisors. There is lots of information about GRE's and graduate schools available for your use in the Peer Advising Office.

During the semester that you plan to graduate, you must complete the senior survey and graduation application. These can be obtained from the Peer Advising Office. All seniors must participate in assessment day activities during February.

**During your SENIOR year complete:**

- Two Advanced Electives
- One Capstone Course

**All remaining General Education, Major, Minor, and Bachelor's Degree Requirements for a minimum of 120 Credit Hours**

## Conclusion

The psychology major is very flexible and can be completed in a variety of different ways once you have taken the foundation courses. This flexibility is advantageous because it allows you to choose your own path and take courses related to your interest within the field of psychology.

No matter where you are in the psychology major, there are always exciting ways to get involved. Psychology Club, Psi Chi, Peer Advising, research projects, service-learning and volunteer work are all excellent ways to get to know students and faculty in the department. Involvement outside of the classroom helps you gain hands-on skills, build your resume and round out your undergraduate experience. The Peer Advising Office has information about how to get more involved in the psychology major, as well as other useful resources for psychology majors. All students are invited to visit us in Johnston 113.