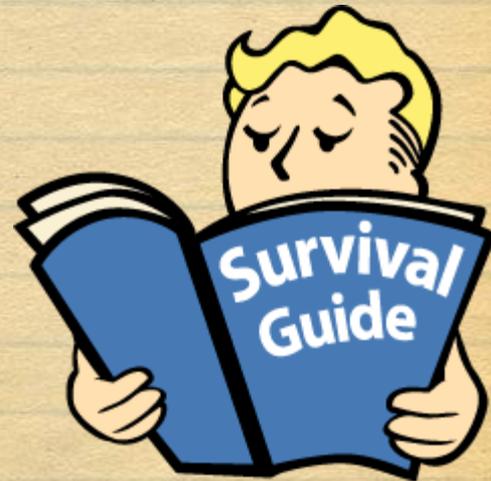


Applying to Graduate School in Psychology

A SURVIVAL GUIDE
FOR STUDENTS



Overview

- o Presentation
- o Discussion with graduate student panel

Quick Introduction

- o Who I am:
 - o Currently study Industrial/Organizational Psychology
 - o Hold an M.Sc. in Management Science
 - o I've gone through this process **twice!**
- o Who you are:
 - o Year of study?
 - o Major?
 - o Goals?

Today's Presentation

- o General Information, Definitions, and Statistics
- o Getting Ready to Apply
- o The Application Process
- o Choosing a Potential Supervisor
- o Pros and Cons
- o Surviving and Thriving

General Info and Stats

- o Psychology has highest undergraduate enrollment in Canada next to business/commerce and general liberal arts and sciences (Simner, 2009).
- o Less than 10% actually enroll in postgraduate education (Rajecki & Anderson, 2004).
 - o **But...** getting into graduate schools in psychology is getting more competitive!
- o Therefore, careful preparation and hard work are required to succeed!

General Info and Stats

- o Over 45 psychology departments in Canada (CPA, 2011)
- o Application costs vary widely
 - o \$55 to \$150 per program
 - o Higher for international students
- o Tuition : \$4,000 – \$8,000 per year
 - o M = \$4,790 (Statistics Canada, 2012)

Definitions:

What kind of degree do I want?

- M.A. = Master of Arts
- M.Sc. = Master of Science
- M. Ed. = Master of Education
- Ph.D. = Doctor of Philosophy
- Psy.D. = Doctor of Psychology
- 2 years + 3 to 5 years
- CPA accreditation (CPA, 2013); APA accreditation (APA, 2013)

M.A./M.Sc. then Ph.D
versus
Streamlined Ph.D

Subfields of Psychology

13 main subfields (Simner,. 2009)

Clinical

- Psychopathology
- Assessment and intervention

Counseling

- “Everyday” problems ; personal growth
- Educational settings

Industrial/ Organizational

- Workplace behaviour
- Agencies and businesses

Neuropsychology

- Explore relationships between brain and behaviour
- Academic or clinical settings

General Experimental

- Theory testing and research
- Academic settings

Acceptance Rates

- o **In Canada:** (CPA, 2009)
 - o *Experimental:* 5 to 40% (M = 24%)
 - o *Clinical:* 0.74 to 17% (M = 9%)
 - o *Counseling:* 8 to 27% (M = 21%)
- o **In USA:** (Norcross, et al., 2010; Norcross et al., 2003)
 - o *Experimental:* 37.6%
 - o *Clinical:*
 - o Practice-oriented: M = 16%
 - o Research-oriented: M = 7%
 - o *Psy.D:* 26 to 50%



Getting Ready to
Apply

Set the Ground Work...

- o Know what you want
 - o Area of psychology
 - o Specific research interests
 - o Is grad school for me?
- o Prepare yourself
 - o Take *relevant* classes
 - o Get to know your professors and university staff
 - o Acquire research experience (in your area of interest if possible!)

o ***Start early!!***



Is Grad School for me?

Ask yourself...

- o Am I avoiding anything by going to graduate school?
- o What am I gaining by going to graduate school?
- o Who am I going to graduate school for?
- o Do my career goals require a graduate degree?
- o Do I have the...
 - o time, money, stamina, maturity, ability, patience, dedication,
 - o curiosity, organizational skills, ability to function on 2 hours of sleep, perseverance, and interest?



Getting Professional and Research Experience

- o Many psychology programs are research intensive – research experience is a good way to differentiate yourself
- o Potential sources of research experience
 - o Research assistantships
 - o Volunteer experience in research lab
 - o Honours thesis
- o Acquiring other forms of professional experience shows that you are proactive and invested in your career choice
 - o Volunteer as CPA campus rep, or on CPA executive

Joignez-vous à notre équipe!

Parlez-vous français et anglais?

Nous sommes à la recherche d'un nouvel **agent des affaires francophones**.

Responsabilités:

- Traduire toutes les communications de la Section
- Entreprendre des initiatives pour communiquer avec les étudiants francophones et les programmes francophones au Canada
- Représenter les communautés francophones à travers le Canada

Contactez Justin Feeney: jfeeney@uwo.ca, ou parlez à un membre de notre équipe.

Join our team!

Do you speak English and French?

We are looking for a new **Francophone Affairs Officer**.

Responsibilities:

- Translates of all section materials
- Engages in outreach activities to francophone students and psychology programs in Canada
- Represents francophone communities across Canada

Contact Justin Feeney: jfeeney@uwo.ca, or speak with any member of the Section for Students executive.

The Application Process

What programs should I apply to?

Apply to programs that...

- ✓ Have an emphasis that is in line with your personal goals

E.g., Research- vs. Practice-oriented

- ✓ Have faculty with research interests in line with your own
- ✓ Are feasible to attend
 - ✓ Geographically
 - ✓ Financially

Typical requirements...

- ✓ Transcripts
- ✓ GRE scores
- ✓ Statement/letter of intent
- ✓ 2-3 reference letters (sometimes four!)
- ✓ Curriculum Vitae (CV)
 - ✓ Education, Honours/Awards, Publications, Presentations, Relevant Experience, Professional Memberships
- ✓ Application fee

A note about organization...

- o Good organization is absolutely crucial for success

University	Degree	Emphasis	Potential Advisors	Supporting Documents	Deadline + Fee	Reference Letters	Tests	Notes
University of Western Ontario	PhD I-O Psych	Scientist-Practitioner Model	Meyer Allen	- Statement of Interest - Writing sample (optional)	Jan 8 th \$95CDN	2	GRE	Has a "Research Unit for Work & Productivity" for giving students practical experience.
...

- o Keep track of program requirements
- o Keep track of what you have completed
- o Make sure you have enough time to create strong applications for each school

Grades/Transcripts

- o What grades are typically required?
 - o Minimum B+, but this varies by program
- o Official transcripts must be mailed to every university you apply to

Graduate Record Examination (GRE)

- Standardized test used around the world as criteria to evaluate who will be admitted into graduate school programs
- Required for a variety of different graduate programs (e.g., Engineering, Humanities, Business, Psychology)



GRE: For Psychology Students

- o You may be required to write up to two forms of the GRE
- o **Revised General Test**
 - o Verbal Reasoning
 - o Quantitative Reasoning
 - o Analytical Writing
- o **Psychology Subject Test (~205 MC questions)**
 - o Experimental – 40%
 - o Social – 43%
 - o Other – 17%
 - o General (4-6%)
 - o Measurement/Methodology (11-13%)

What you learn from the GRE...

- Before studying for GRE Verbal:

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

- After studying for GRE Verbal:

Exclusive dedication to necessitous vocational pursuits without interludes of hedonistic diversion renders Jack a hebetudinous fellow.

GRE: Fees

- o General Test: \$185
- o Psychology Test: \$150
- o Additional score reports (first four are free): \$25
- o Test preparation:
 - o POWERPREP II, and associated ETS prep material: Free
 - o Textbooks: \$50-100
 - o Courses: Kaplan: ~\$1,100; Oxford Seminars: ~ \$565

GRE: Where and When

- o General Test: Computer-based only in Canada
 - o Where: Any ETS testing center (visit ETS website)
 - o When: Year-round (subject to availability)

- o Psychology Test: Paper-based only
 - o Where:
 - o See test center list: http://www.ets.org/s/gre/pdf/gre_pbt_center_lists.pdf
 - o When:
 - o September 28th, 2013 (register by Aug 16, 2013)
 - o October 19th, 2013 (register by Sept 6, 2013)
 - o April 5th, 2014 (register by Feb 21, 2014)

Applying for Funding: Federal

- o Tri-Council Funding
 - o SSHRC (www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca)
 - o Most psychology research falls under their jurisdiction
 - o CIHR (www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca)
 - o Some Clinical and Health Psychology research
 - o NSERC (www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca)
 - o Cognitive/Neuropsychology

Applying for Funding: Provincial

- o A few examples...
- o Ontario – Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS)
 - o *See websites of Ontario universities you plan to attend*
- o Québec – Fonds de recherche:
 - o Société et culture (www.fqrsc.gouv.qc.ca)
 - o Nature et technologies (www.fqrnt.gouv.qc.ca)
 - o Santé (www.frsq.gouv.qc.ca)

- o Check on the websites of the universities you apply to

- o Two additional resources:
 - o www.scholarshipscanada.com
 - o www.studentawards.com

Letter of Intent

- o Essentially a short (1-2 page) description of:
 - o Your research interests
 - o Why you want to go to grad school
 - o Why you will succeed
- o Very important part of your application
- o Your chance to differentiate yourself from the competition

Letter of Intent

- o **Tips:** (Buskist & Burke, 2007; Hill, 2008)
 - o Be clear and professional (humour can be dangerous)
 - o Follow directions
 - o Do not include irrelevant details
 - o Consult with professors and graduate students
 - o *Tailor the letter to each program*
 - o Apply to potential advisors; know of, and intelligently discuss, their research
- o Many more resources online:
 - o Search “letter of intent” or “statement of purpose”

Reference Letters

- o Most schools require a minimum of two reference letters from professors
- o The best reference letters are written by professors who know you *and* your work
 - o Not enough to say: “Katie Keener received a mark of 99.9% in my class”
 - o The committee will see this on your transcript anyway!

Reference Letters

Supply your referees with:

- ✓ A(n) (unofficial) transcript of your grades
- ✓ Your letter of intent (ideally 2nd or 3rd draft)
- ✓ GRE scores
- ✓ Specific instructions for writing reference letters for each school (*especially the deadline!*)
- ✓ Addressed envelopes

“Kisses of Death”

1. Damaging personal statement
2. Harmful letters of recommendation
3. Lack of program information
4. Poor writing skills
5. Misfired attempts to impress



(Appleby & Appleby, 2006)

Notes about Applying

- o Application deadlines vary from December 1st to March 1st
- o Admissions decisions typically by made by April 1st
- o Accepted applications typically have until April 15th to respond

- o Don't feel pressured; consider all options (CPA, 2010)

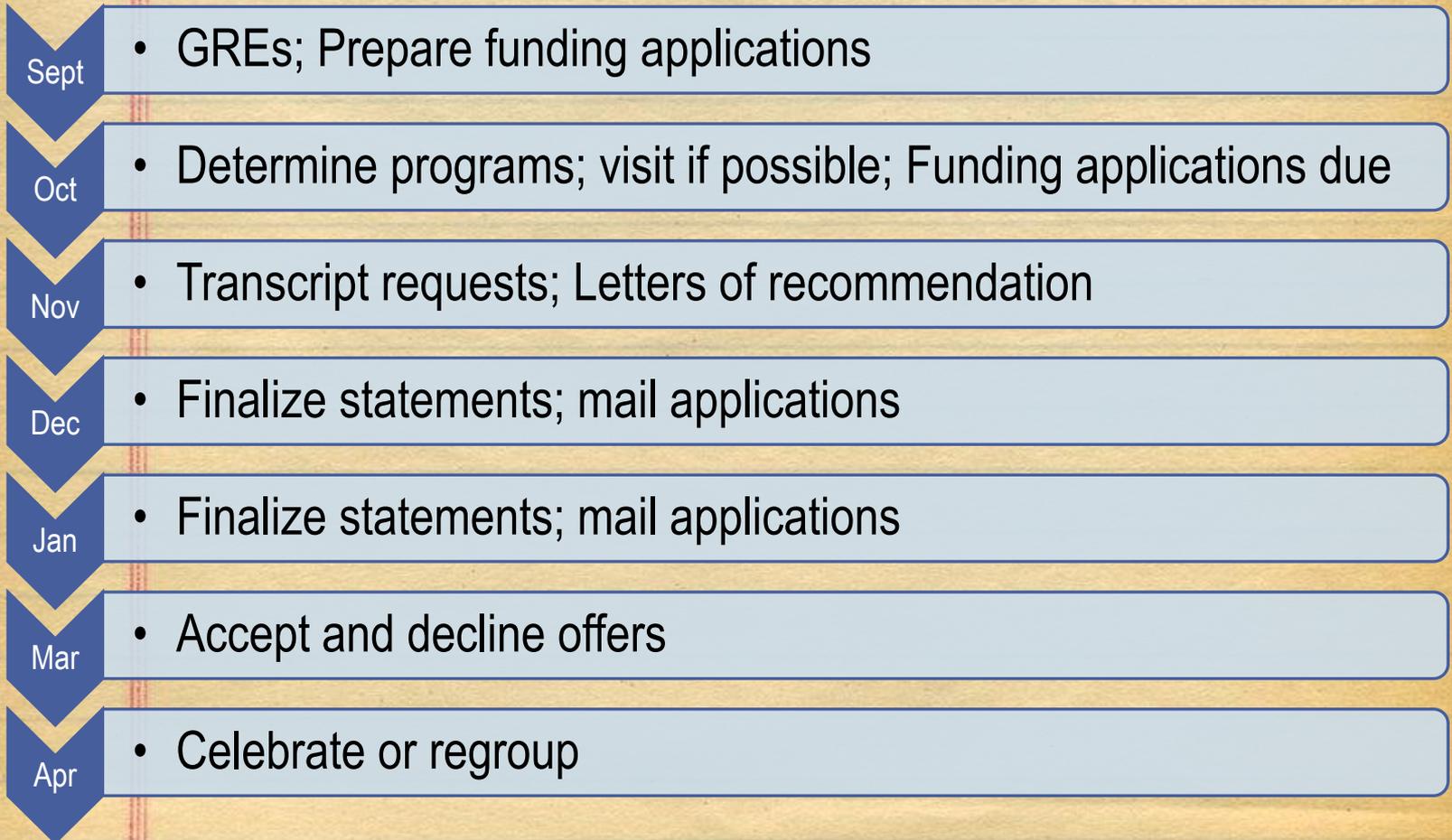
Summary: Checklist

- Professional experiences
- Transcripts
- GRE scores
- Funding opportunities
- Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Contact potential advisors
- Reference letters
- Personal statements

- Breathe and treat yourself
- Wait!

Summary: Timeline

A route to success...



Summary: Costs

Item	Cost
Transcript	\$10
Application	\$85
General GRE	\$185
Psych GRE	\$150
Supplies and postage	\$100
TOTAL (1 application)	\$530
2 applications	\$615
3 applications	\$700
4 applications	\$785

Choosing a Supervisor

Why this is an important decision:

- o Your supervisor will be your boss for many years
- o Your supervisor heavily influences your graduate experience

Factors to Consider

- o Area of expertise
- o Style, personality, standards
- o Ability to collaborate
- o Track record
- o Ability to guide beyond the program
- o Availability

(Datta, et al., 2009; Ray, 2007)

Where to Look for Potential Advisors

- o Visit faculty and lab websites
- o Consult graduate studies office
- o Review CVs and publications
- o Ask

How to Contact a Potential Advisor

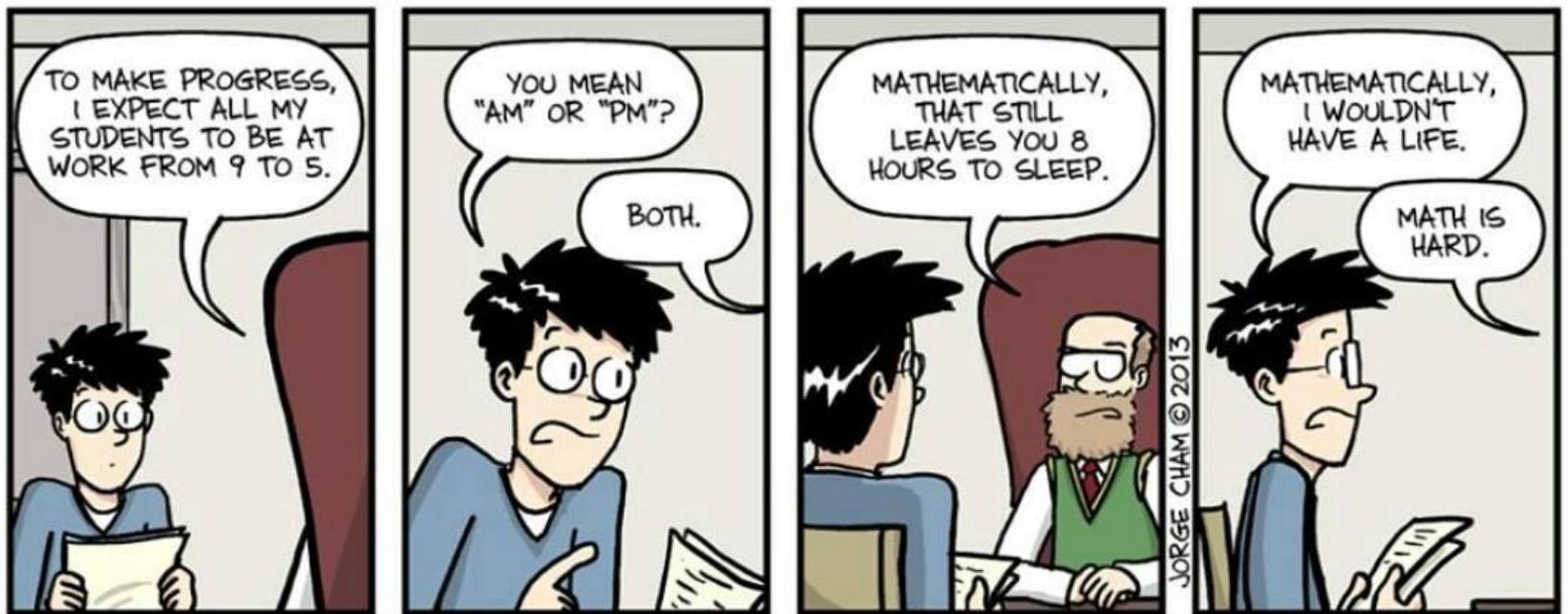
- o Carefully evaluate prospective supervisors on the basis of objective criteria
- o Begin initial contact by indicating that you are inquiring about options and not necessarily ready to make a decision
- o Outline your ideas or objectives and relate it to their current work
- o Indicate you would like to discuss this further
- o Create an opportunity to meet the professor in person, if possible, visit the laboratory

Pros and Cons

Pros and Cons of Grad School

Pros	Cons
You get to research a topic that you enjoy!	You will have less time to do other things you enjoy
You get paid to research that topic you enjoy!	You don't get paid much
Your schedule is flexible	You're often overscheduled
You have the opportunity to discuss ideas, concepts, and theories with people who are passionate about the same subject	You have to discover what you're actually interested in
You may travel to exotic locations for conferences	You have to write something to get published for
You are independent	You may have too much independence
You have a broad range of career opportunities	It will take you at least 5 years to graduate

Surviving and Thriving



Surviving and Thriving

- o Time management
- o Identify your strengths and weaknesses
- o Make a list of your responsibilities
 - o Prioritize them
- o Break projects into smaller steps or goals
 - o You must become your own “project manager”
- o Don't spread yourself too thin
 - o Seize opportunities, but also need to learn to say “no”

Surviving and Thriving

- o Clarify what is expected of you by your supervisor
- o Look out for yourself
 - o Research
 - o Teaching assistantships
- o Show initiative
 - o You acquire the most important skills outside of the classroom

Surviving and Thriving

- o Seek mentorship
- o Get involved: your grad school experience is what you make it
 - o Attend department events, volunteer
- o Network!

Thank you[!]



Nick Bremner
nbremner@uwo.ca

Graduate Student Panel

Nick Bremner, PhD student, Industrial/Organizational Psychology, Western University

Helen Lee, PhD student, Industrial/Organizational Psychology, Western University

Meredith Rocchi, PhD student, Experimental Psychology, University of Ottawa

Missy Teatero, PhD student, Clinical Psychology, Lakehead University

Karen Zhang, PhD student, Clinical Psychology, Western University

Graduate Student Panel

- o How early should I start preparing for graduate school?
- o Should I include personal information in my statement of intent?
- o What if I mess up on the GREs?
- o What are some GRE study tips?
- o What's the best program for X?
- o Can I take maternity/paternity leave while in graduate school?
- o Will I be able to get a job after graduate school?

Additional Resources

- o Resources for students offered by CPA:
 - o <http://www.cpa.ca/students/resources/>
- o Openings for American Schools (as of 15/04/2013):
 - o <http://www.apa.org/education/grad/graduate-openings.aspx>
- o Graduate Study in Psychology (2013 edition; APA, 2013)