



NASP Report of Graduate Education in School Psychology: 2016–2017

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ABSTRACT

Each year the Graduate Education Committee of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) administers the *National School Psychology Program Database Survey*. Data regarding the status of graduate education in school psychology have been collected annually for both specialist and doctoral programs since 2010. This report for the 2016–2017 academic year summarizes data collected from the directors of all known school psychology programs and provides estimates regarding selected outcomes for those programs. During the 2016–2017 academic year, an estimated 10,209 students (including interns) were enrolled in school psychology programs. Further, an estimated 3,118 first-year students were enrolled, and an estimated 2,796 students (2,210 specialist-level and 586 doctoral-level) graduated from school psychology programs. Approximately 94% of specialist-level program graduates work in schools. In contrast, approximately 47% of doctoral-level program graduates work in schools, while 38% work as faculty members within a university setting. Additional data include information regarding credit hour requirements, financial support, enrollment, internship placement, and student outcomes.

Keywords: graduate education, school psychology, graduate preparation, training, specialist, doctoral

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The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has periodically collected data regarding graduate education in the United States since the mid-1970s, allowing for the monitoring of trends that impact the health of school psychology. These data summarize current year enrollment, program availability, student outcomes, access to financial aid, and shifts in graduate education requirements. Reporting information concerning enrollment (including minority enrollment), financial support, and other data regarding graduate education supports NASP in responding effectively to the strategic goal of addressing shortages in school psychology. These data can also provide an important frame of reference

to facilitate self-evaluation of graduate programs. Additionally, prospective students can utilize these data through an online, publically accessible database (NASP, n.d.) to more fully understand critical variables associated with graduate programs to which they are applying.

These data also allow for the generation of annual reports, thereby offering a current snapshot of graduate education in school psychology. The survey process also meets a long-term goal of regularly tracking data to allow for more detailed trend analysis in the future. Prior to the annual reports provided by Gadke et al. (2016, 2017), Rossen and von der Embse (2014) provided a historical report of the data available up to 2014. Tracking trends is important as we examine changes in enrollment and graduation over time as well as issues that may affect personnel shortages within the field of school psychology. The current paper, the third annual report, provides a summary of selected data collected from graduate education programs in school psychology for the 2016–2017 academic year. Given the variability in response rates on specific items, estimates for selected outcomes are provided.

METHODS

The annual *National School Psychology Program Database Survey* was open from November, 2017 through January, 2018.

Participants

During the 2016–2017 academic year, there were 251 known institutions offering a graduate education program in school psychology at either the specialist-level, doctoral-level, or both. Among the 251 institutions, there were 322 programs: 221 at the specialist-level and 101 at the doctoral-level. Response rates from programs varied by survey question, with response rates for individual items from 25% to 100%. Only programs that provided complete data within a given area of the survey (e.g., credit hours, enrollment) were included in the analyses.

Measure

The *National School Psychology Program Database Survey* is an annual survey delivered to directors of both specialist and doctoral programs in school psychology. Respondents provide information across a number of domains, including the nature of programs offered, approval/accreditation status, student financial support information, enrollment information, faculty appointments, opportunities for respecialization, internship placements, and student outcome data. The database can be accessed at <http://apps.nasponline.org/standards-and-certification/graduate-education/index.aspx>.

Procedure

All known school psychology program directors were contacted via e-mail with instructions regarding how to complete the national survey using a Web-based portal through the NASP website. Multiple attempts were made to encourage participation in the survey. Frequent e-mail messages were distributed via the NASP Graduate Education Community and the Trainers of School Psychologists Listserv. Individual e-mail messages were sent and telephone calls were made to program directors reminding them to complete the survey.

The portal provided program directors with direct access to enter and edit their program's data on the NASP website, along with the option to provide access to other individuals within the institution to

complete the survey. All directors also were provided with detailed instructions on how to access their program, the content of the survey, and how to complete the survey.

Once the survey was completed, the portal was closed to program directors and uploaded to the NASP database. For the purposes of data analysis, data were uploaded into a single file and cleaned for missing information, notable outliers, and other response errors. Microsoft Excel was utilized for all analyses.

RESULTS

Data were reported based on program type (i.e., specialist or doctoral) across each of the variables assessed within the survey. For the purpose of this annual report, results focused on program approval and accreditation, credit hour requirements, financial support, enrollment, internship placements, and student outcomes. Additionally, available data were used to extrapolate enrollment and outcome estimates for all known U.S. school psychology programs.

Approval and Accreditation

A detailed description of program approval and accreditation data may be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of Approved and Accredited School Psychology Programs in 2016–2017

	Specialist	Doctoral
NASP		
Approved	145 (66%)	71 (70%)
Approval With Conditions	17 (8%)	1 (1%)
Not Approved	59 (27%)	29 (29%)
APA		
Accredited	--	74 (73%)
Not Accredited	--	27 (27%)
Total	221	101

Note. There were 251 institutions offering a total of 322 programs (many institutions offered more than one program on the same campus).

Overall, 221 specialist-level programs participated in this portion of the survey. Of these programs, 66% reported full NASP program approval or accreditation, 8% reported NASP program approval or accreditation with conditions, and 27% were not NASP approved or accredited at the time of data collection. Among the 101 participating doctoral programs, 70% held full NASP approval or accreditation, one reported NASP approval with conditions, and 29% of doctoral programs were not approved or accredited by NASP. Further, 74 out of the 101 doctoral programs who responded to the survey reported accreditation by the American Psychological Association (APA), which only accredits doctoral-level programs.

Credit Hours

A detailed description of the range and average number of credit hours required for graduation can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of Credit Hours Required for Graduation in School Psychology Programs in 2016–2017 by Program Approval and Accreditation Status

Programs	Specialist			Doctoral		
	n	\bar{x} (hours)	Range	n	\bar{x} (hours)	Range
NASP Program Status						
Approved/Accredited	135	69.5	60–99	63	111.6	64–144
Not Approved/Accredited	38	66.8	50–90	25	98.1	48–145
Approved/Accredited with Conditions	16	68.1	60–83	1	90.0	—
Total	189	68.2	60–99	89	99.9	48–145
APA Program Status						
	n	\bar{x} (hours)	Range	n	\bar{x} (hours)	Range
Accredited	—	—	—	63	111.5	64–144
Not Accredited	—	—	—	26	98.1	48–145
Total	—	—	—	89	104.8	48–145

Note. Quarter credit hours were converted to semester credit hours using the equation (credit hours) \times 0.67 (see McMaster, Reschly, & Peters, 1989; Thomas, 1998).

A total of 189 specialist-level programs reported the number of credit hours required for degree completion. For the purposes of this analysis, programs that reported quarter hours were converted to semester hours by multiplying quarter hours by .67 (see McMaster, Reschly, & Peters, 1989; Thomas, 1998).

The average number of required semester hours across all specialist-level programs was 68.2. The average number of credit hours for programs with NASP approval/accreditation, NASP approval/accreditation with conditions, and without NASP approval/accreditation differed by less than three credit hours.

The average number of required semester hours across all doctoral programs was 99.9. The average number of hours for NASP approved/accredited doctoral programs was 111.6, whereas those without NASP approval/accreditation averaged 98.1 hours. The one reporting doctoral program that maintained NASP approval with conditions reported 90 semester hours. Doctoral programs with APA accreditation averaged 111.5 hours, whereas those without APA accreditation averaged 98.1 semester hours.

Financial Support

Table 3 provides a summary of the data regarding financial support of students during their graduate education. For the purposes of this survey, funding includes any form of monetary assistance, which may consist of federal aid, student loans, or monetary assistance by the academic program or institution.

Across 131 reporting specialist-level programs, 1,004 first-year students (an average of 7.7 per program) and 1,780 students across all years (an average of 13.6 per program) received funding to complete their graduate education. On average, students employed in a work-study position, which may include graduate or teaching assistantships, completed 11.5 work hours per week ($n = 133$ programs).

Table 3. School Psychology Students Receiving Financial Support During the 2016–2017 Academic Year

	Specialist				Doctoral			
	Programs (n)	Students (n)	\bar{x}	Range	Programs (n)	Students (n)	\bar{x}	Range
1st Years ^a	131	1,004	7.7	0–30	68	351	5.2	0–20
All Years ^a	131	1,780	15.8	0–63	69	1,282	18.6	0–75
Min. Weekly GA/TA Hours	133	--	11.5	2–24	70	--	14.3	0–20

^a Includes students receiving any form of monetary assistance through Federal Student Financial Aid or student loans, or any form of monetary assistance from the academic program (e.g., teaching or research assistantships).

Sixty-eight doctoral programs reported that 351 first-year students received funding (an average of 5.2 per program), while 69 doctoral programs reported that 1,287 students across all years received funding (an average of 18.6 per program). Students enrolled in doctoral programs and employed in a work-study position (e.g., graduate or teaching assistantships) were required to work, on average, a minimum of 14.3 hours each week ($n = 70$ program).

Enrollment

Student enrollment data for reporting specialist-level and doctoral programs during the 2016–2017 academic year can be found in Table 4.

Table 4. Student Enrollment in School Psychology Programs in 2016–2017

Students	Specialist (n = 178 programs)				Doctoral (n = 75 programs)			
	<i>n</i>	\bar{x}	%	Range	<i>n</i>	\bar{x}	%	Range
Total	4,510	32.2	--	2–121	2,295	30.6	--	3–99
Males	627	4.5	13.9%	0–31	367	4.9	16.0%	0–23
First Year	1,591	11.4	35.3%	0–57	445	5.9	19.4%	0–21
Minority	1,266	9.0	28.1%	0–58	574	7.7	25.0%	0–30
Accepted	2,343	16.7	--	0–81	781	10.4	--	0–62
Applicants	5,699	40.7	--	0–140	2,695	35.3	--	0–293

Note. The data reported do not represent all known programs in school psychology, and thus do not describe the entire enrollment in school psychology graduate programs.

During the 2016–2017 academic year, an average of 32.2 students were enrolled across 178 reporting specialist-level U.S. school psychology programs. Of 4,510 total students, 13.9% were male and 28.1% were reported as being of minority status. Of the 178 specialist-level program coordinators that responded to this item on the survey, an average of 11.4 students ($n = 1,591$) were in their first year of study per program. Specialist-level programs reported an average of 40.7 applicants per program, and those same programs offered admission to an average of 16.7 applicants per program.

There was an average of 30.6 students enrolled across 75 reporting doctoral programs. Of these students, 16.0% were males and 25.0% were reported to be of minority status. An average of 5.9 students ($n = 445$) were in their first year of study. Finally, 75 doctoral programs reported an average of 35.3 applications, with an average of 10.4 admission offers per program.

Internship Placement

A summary of the student internship data for specialist and doctoral programs may be found in Table 5.

Table 5. Internships in School Psychology Programs in 2016–2017

Internship Data				
Interns	Specialist Students ($n = 141$ programs)			
	n	\bar{x}	%	Range
Total	1,265	9.0	--	0–28
100% School Based	1,235	8.8	97.6%	0–28
	Doctoral Students ($n = 67$ programs)			
	n	\bar{x}	%	Range
Total	349	5.2	--	0–22
100% School Based	191	2.9	54.7%	0–14
Part-Time School	67	1.0	19.2%	0–8
100% Out of School	93	1.4	26.7%	0–18
APA Accredited	116	1.7	33.2%	0–8
APPIC and CDSPP	40	0.6	11.5%	0–6
APPIC Only	6	0.1	1.7%	0–3
CDSPP Only	145	2.2	41.6%	0–20
Non-APPIC/CDSPP Criteria Not Met	57	0.9	16.3%	0–10

Note. APA = American Psychological Association; APPIC = Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers; CDSPP = Council of Directors of School Psychology Programs.

Results from 141 reporting specialist-level programs indicated that there were 1,265 total interns during the 2016–2017 academic year, with an average of 9.0 interns per program. Of these, 97.6% completed the entirety of their internship within a school setting. Doctoral programs presented with a more diverse set of internship placements. Across the 67 reporting doctoral programs, there were 348 interns, with an average of 5.2 interns per program. Slightly more than half of these students completed an entirely school-based internship, while 19.2% were part-time in the schools and 26.7% completed the entirety of their internship in a setting outside of the schools.

There was significant variability in meeting external criteria for doctoral-level internships. Of the 67 reporting doctoral programs, 33.2% of students completed an internship accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA), 1.7% of students completed an internship that was a member of the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC), and 11.5% of students completed an internship that was both an APPIC member and met the Council of Directors of School Psychology Programs (CDSPP) internship guidelines. Furthermore, 41.6% of students completed a program that solely met the CDSPP guidelines, while 16.3% of students completed an internship program that did not meet any accreditation/approval guidelines. It is important to note that an internship that is accredited by the APA is an APPIC member and meets the CDSPP internship guidelines.

Student Outcomes

Student outcomes refer to students’ graduation rates, time to graduation, student outcomes, and employment outcomes. Specific student outcome data can be found in Table 6.

Table 6. Student Outcomes in School Psychology Programs in 2016–2017

Outcome	Specialist Programs				Doctoral Programs			
	<i>n</i> (programs)	<i>n</i> (students)	\bar{x} (students)	Range	<i>n</i> (programs)	<i>n</i> (students)	\bar{x} (students)	Range
Students Graduated	153	1,531	10.0	0–38	78	450	5.8	0–39
Median Years to Degree Completion	151	--	3.1	2–4	71	--	5.3	3.8–9
Graduates Employed in School	141	1,326	9.4	0–32	64	173	2.7	0–19
Graduates Employed as Faculty	129	1	0.0	0–1	62	135	2.2	0–9
Not Employed	122	7	0.1	0–1	59	6	0.1	0–3
Transferred From Specialist. to Doctoral Program	143	48	0.3	0–4	--	--	--	--
Exited Due to Inadequate Performance	140	46	0.3	0–5	72	15	0.2	0–2
Withdrew From Program	142	168	1.2	0–86	73	47	0.6	0–5

Across 153 reporting specialist-level programs, 1,531 students graduated during the 2016–2017 academic year ($\bar{x} = 10.0$ per program), with a median of 3.1 years to degree completion. Doctoral programs reported 450 graduating students during the 2016–2017 academic year ($\bar{x} = 5.8$ per program), with a median of 5.3 years required for degree completion.

Among reporting specialist-level programs, 1,326 graduates went to work in schools ($\bar{x} = 9.4$ per program), only one graduate obtained employment as program faculty, and seven remained unemployed. Forty-eight students transferred from the specialist-level to a doctoral-level program, 46 students exited the program due to inadequate performance, and 168 students withdrew from the program. Notably, among the 168 withdrawals, more than half were from one program reporting across six campuses.

Among reporting doctoral-level programs ($n = 64$), 173 graduates were employed in schools ($\bar{x} = 2.7$ per program), 135 graduates obtained employment as university faculty ($\bar{x} = 2.2$ per program), and six remained unemployed. An additional 15 students exited the program due to inadequate performance, and 47 students withdrew from the program.

Estimates of National Student Enrollment and Outcomes

To estimate the total graduate student and employment outcomes across the country during the 2016–2017 academic year, these data were extrapolated from available information in each of these domains (see Table 7).

Table 7. Estimates of Student Enrollment and Outcomes in School Psychology Programs in 2016–2017

Students	Specialist Programs	Doctoral Programs
	<i>n</i> (estimation)	<i>n</i> (estimation)
Total Students	7,116	3,091
Male Students	995	494
First-Year Students	2,519	599
Minority Students	1,998	773
Graduated	2,210	586
Graduates Employed in Schools	2,077	273
Graduates Employed as Faculty	2	222
Graduates Not Employed	13	10
Transferred From SL to DL Program	74	--
Exited Program Due to Inadequate Performance	73	21
Withdrew From the Program	265	65

Note. Estimates were calculated using known number of specialist and doctoral level programs and the average number of students admitted and enrolled by programs that completed the survey.

The extrapolation required multiplying the averages from each individual domain by all known active school psychology programs in the United States by degree program (221 specialist-level; 101 doctoral programs). Based on this analysis, an estimated 7,116 specialist-level students and 3,091 doctoral-level students were enrolled in school psychology programs across the United States in 2016–2017, for a total of 10,209 students. Within specialist-level programs, there were an estimated 995 male students, 1,998 students of minority status, and 2,519 first-year students. Within doctoral programs, there were an estimated 494 male students, 773 students of minority status, and 599 first-year students. Finally, it is estimated that there were 2,210 graduates of specialist programs and 586 graduates of doctoral programs, for a total of 2,796 new graduates entering the workforce.

An estimated 2,350 new graduates gained employment in the schools; among them, 2,077 were from specialist-level programs, and 273 were from doctoral-level programs. An estimated 224 graduates gained employment as faculty, with 222 coming from doctoral-level programs. An estimated 23 graduates were not employed after graduation. Finally, an estimated 74 students transferred from a specialist-level to a doctoral-level program, 94 students (73 specialist-level, 21 doctoral) exited the program due to inadequate performance, and an estimated 330 students withdrew, though again those estimates include withdrawals from one program that accounts for more than half of all withdrawals.

DISCUSSION

In the 2016–2017 academic year, there continues to be a wide range of credit hour requirements for both specialist-level programs (60–99 hours) and doctoral programs (48–145 hours), as seen in the two previous academic years (Gadke, Valley-Gray, & Rossen, 2016, 2017). This could be due to a number of reasons. First, programs that report requiring fewer hours may accept credit for previous graduate education experiences. For example, students may be exempt from graduate coursework completed in a previous

specialist-level school psychology program or a degree in a related discipline. Second, some institutions that have both specialist-level and doctoral programs may have reported the range across both programs rather than responding specifically for each degree type. Finally, it's likely that required hours for practica and internships account for significant differences among programs. Nevertheless, there is significant variability in the reported number of credit hours, which may have implications for students pursuing the degree in terms of time and cost.

In 1982, 1988, and 1997, specialist programs reported an average of 63, 66, and 68 required credit hours, while doctoral programs reported 91, 101, and 106 required credit hours, respectively (Rossen & von der Embse, 2014). The current data indicate an increase in the number of credit hours required by specialist-level programs (reporting an average of 68.2 hours), but a decrease in the number of hours required by doctoral programs (reporting an average of 99.9 hours). Compared to the last two academic years reported by Gadke et al. (2016, 2017), there has been a downward trend in the required number of credit hours among specialist programs as follows: 71 hours (2016), 69.3 hours (2017), and 68.2 hours. Similarly, doctoral programs have reported 113 hours (2016), 108.9 hours (2017), and 99.9 hours. Slightly more specialist-level and doctoral-level programs responded to the current survey when compared to the previous years.

Doctoral students appear to continue to be the priority in terms of financial aid compared to specialist-level students. Additionally, it appears that many students in both doctoral and specialist-level programs alike maintain funding throughout graduate school. According to the survey, this support included any type of financial aid or graduate/teaching assistantships between 2 and 20 hours per week. Over the last several years (Gadke et al., 2016, 2017), these data continue to remain relatively consistent, suggesting financial support remains viable for students across programs.

As reported in previous years, female students continue to vastly outnumber males in terms of enrollment, comprising 85% of the total enrollment across specialist-level and doctoral programs. Consistent with previous years, males make up approximately 14% of specialist programs and 16% of doctoral programs. These data remain consistent with those from the school psychology workforce (Walcott & Hyson, 2018). Further, 27% of students across specialist and doctoral programs were reported to be of minority status, a slight increase from the previous report. This number continues to exceed the estimated diversity within the workforce, with only 13% of school psychologists identifying as minority (Walcott & Hyson, 2018).

Doctoral programs reported an increase in both applicants and students accepted for the 2016–2017 school year, which is notable given that the previous report (Gadke et al., 2017) reported a decrease from 2014–2015 school year to the 2015–2016 year. During the previous year specialist-level programs reported an average of 36.1 applicants, offering admission to an average of 8.1, while doctoral programs reported an average of 34.6 applicants, offering admission to 5.6 students. During the most recent academic year, specialist-level programs reported an average of 40.7 applicants, with an average of 16.7 receiving an offer of admission. Doctoral programs reported an average of 35.3 applicants, with an average of 10.4 receiving an offer of admission. Notably, caution is warranted when attempting to use applicant data to identify total applicants in a given year, since a single applicant may apply to numerous programs and would be counted each time as a separate applicant.

Despite these positive trends, continuous and concerted efforts to identify and link qualified students to open positions in school psychology graduate programs is crucial given the critical shortages within school psychology. It is unclear whether these students who are not admitted apply again the following year or select a different career path. Efforts such as the 2nd Round Candidate Match for School Psychology

Programs (<https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/becoming-a-school-psychologist/2nd-round-candidate-match>), which provides a list of programs with remaining openings following the standard admission cycle, is one step to provide this bridge for prospective students.

Not surprisingly, the data continue to suggest that almost all specialist-level students complete their internships in a school setting; however, doctoral internships are much more varied. Approximately 54% of doctoral students complete their internships entirely in a school setting, an increase from 49% the previous year. Approximately 20% spend part of their internship year in the schools, a decrease from 34.6% the previous year, while 27% complete the entirety of their internship in settings outside of the schools, consistent with data obtained the previous year. Doctoral students completing internships in a setting accredited by the American Psychological Association were down from 38% in 2015–2016 to 33% in the current year. Approximately 55% of doctoral students completed their internship in a setting that met APPIC or CDSPP guidelines, or both, mapping onto data obtained in previous years. A total of 16% of students were in settings that did not meet these criteria, an increase from 12.8% the previous year.

Finally, this is the first year we reported estimates of employment outcomes among the programs' most recent graduates. Among specialist-level graduates, 94% obtained employment in schools; while only 47% of doctoral graduates reported working in schools, and another 38% obtained employment as faculty. An estimated 2,350 graduates therefore entered employment in schools, which can provide an important benchmark for the field's ability to fill vacant positions. Of note, an estimated 424 students left their programs due to inadequate academic performance or withdrawal from the program. While a large proportion of those students withdrew from one program in particular (across a number of campuses), future researchers could reach out to those students to identify the factors that contributed to their withdrawal (e.g., cost, goodness of fit, disputes or conflicts within the program).

Consistent with previous years, not all program coordinators responded to the survey or completed it in its entirety. That being said, an extrapolation method was necessary to generate data estimates for all school psychology graduate programs. According to this year's estimates, overall enrollment has increased from 6,827 to 7,118 students in specialist programs and from 2,970 to 3,091 students enrolled in doctoral students. Specialist-level programs also had estimated increases in the number of male, first-year, and minority students, but a decrease in graduates relative to the previous year. Doctoral programs saw an increase in the number of first-year students and graduates, with a decrease in males and minority students.

Limitations

These data, while only presenting an overview of the current status of graduate preparation in school psychology, should be interpreted with caution due to several limitations. The greatest limitation was associated with reporting methods. Programs were inconsistent regarding how they reported certain data. For example, when some programs wanted to report "0" or "no" they actually wrote those items in the response block; however, it appeared that some programs simply left items blank to reflect "0" and "no." This made it impossible to decipher among those responding in the negative, and those simply not responding for certain survey items. In a similar vein, some programs left out whole sections of data or only partially completed specific items. Similar to last year, if data were missing or appeared to be reported in error, those data were removed from the final data set in an effort to minimize inaccuracies. Unfortunately, this resulted in an incomplete representation of all the current programs, which the authors tried to rectify by extrapolating data to obtain estimates for the field. Finally, given that these data are

available to the public at the program level, it is possible that some coordinators did not report certain data that would potentially reflect poorly on their program, leading to the potential for selection bias.

The NASP Graduate Education Database serves as a valuable resource to school psychology. In particular, it can be useful in addressing shortages in school psychology, which is one of NASP's key initiatives. In order to address these current and anticipated shortages effectively, it is essential to have accurate data about school psychology programs and graduates that can be tracked over time. It is crucial that faculty participate in the ongoing data reporting in order to maintain accurate data to help target strategies to address the current shortage and to develop strategies to ensure the security of the profession.

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Please cite this document as:

- Gadke, D. L., Valley-Gray, S., & Rossen, E. (2018). *NASP Report of Graduate Education in School Psychology: 2016–2017* [Research report]. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.