Master of Arts in Applied Behavioral Science

Why study applied behavioral science?

The Department of Applied Behavioral Science offers a curriculum through which students learn how to examine and address problems of social importance across the lifespan. Students receive training in the application of behavioral science to improve the human condition through prevention and intervention.

Admission to Graduate Studies

An applicant seeking to pursue graduate study in the College may be admitted as either a degree-seeking or non-degree seeking student. Policies and procedures of Graduate Studies govern the process of Graduate admission. These may be found in the Graduate Studies (http://catalog.ku.edu/graduate-studies) section of the online catalog.

Please consult the Departments & Programs (http://catalog.ku.edu/liberal-arts-sciences) section of the online catalog for information regarding program-specific admissions criteria and requirements. Special admissions requirements pertain to Interdisciplinary Studies degrees, which may be found in the Graduate Studies section of the online catalog.

Graduate Admission

Applicants seeking admission to the master’s or doctoral program should apply online (http://graduate.ku.edu/ku-graduate-application). Detailed instructions are provided at that website. Applications are submitted to the office of Graduate Studies (http://graduate.ku.edu/application-process), which records and forwards them to the department. Applicants submit a completed application form and 1 official transcript of all undergraduate and any graduate course work. They may also submit copies of relevant scholarly or professional work, published or unpublished. Reports of Graduate Record Examination scores are encouraged but not required.

Applicants also must obtain letters of recommendation from 3 professionals familiar with their academic or professional records. These are also submitted online by the applicant’s reference.

Among the department’s application materials is a list of the faculty members and descriptions of their research, scholarly, and professional interests. Applicants select at least 3 faculty members whose interests match their interests. These faculty members constitute the applicant’s admissions committee; only they review the application and its supporting materials. An applicant is accepted when one of the faculty members consents to admit the student. This faculty member becomes the advisor of record.

For admission in the fall semester, the application and supporting materials should be received by December 15 of the previous year. Later applications receive consideration in the order of their receipt. Students may be admitted for the spring semester through the application procedures above, but there is no filing deadline.

M.A. in Applied Behavioral Science Degree Requirements

The master’s program trains highly competent scientist-practitioners in applied behavioral science. It requires course work on the basic principles and conceptual foundations of behavioral science and its research methods but emphasizes course work and training in applied and intervention research (e.g., assessment, analysis, intervention, evaluation). Its objective is to advance empirically based solutions to problems of individual and societal importance, both local and global.

The master’s program follows a junior-colleague model. Students work closely with their advisors and join them in many aspects of professional development. This includes designing and conducting research, preparing manuscripts for presentation and publication, presenting and publishing those manuscripts, and engaging in all facets of the responsible conduct of research. Students typically work with one advisor, but may work with other faculty members or have co-advisors. If a student’s or advisor’s interests change, students are free to change advisors.

The M.A. degree requires 33 credit hours: 18 hours in a practicum, and research and elective courses. Students also must conduct, write up, and orally defend an empirically based thesis. The following 6 courses are required:

1. Ethical, Legal, and Professional Issues (3). Instruction in ethical principles in the conduct of research (e.g., informed consent, data analysis), legal issues in professional conduct (e.g., plagiarism, copyright), and professional skills (e.g., journal reviewing, professional communication). ABSC 841
2. Principles of Behavior I (3). The science of behavior (e.g., observation, experimentation), laboratory methods, behavior analysis (e.g., reinforcement, stimulus control), and their applications (e.g., early childhood, disabilities). ABSC 861
3. Research Methods I (3). Strategies and tactics of scientific research (e.g., objectivity, empiricism), the logic of experimentation (e.g., validity, reliability), measurement and direct observation, and experimental designs for single-subject and time-series analyses. ABSC 735
4. Conceptual Foundations I (3). The history and philosophy of behavioral science, contemporary advances in basic research for application, the analysis of everyday behavior (e.g., cognition, emotion), and current issues in the discipline and the profession (e.g., relations between basic and applied research). ABSC 800
5. Applied Behavior Analysis I (3). The characteristics of applied behavioral research (assessment, analysis, intervention, evaluation), intervention research (clinical, community), applied procedures and programs, social validity, and ethical issues. ABSC 746
6. Experimental Analysis of Behavior (3) ABSC 799
7. Research or Intervention Practicum (3). A supervised practicum course in either basic or applied research or behavioral interventions.

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ABSC 870 Practicum I in Behavioral Psychology 1-6
ABSC 871 Practicum I in Behavior Analysis: _____ 1-6
ABSC 872 Practicum I in: _____ 1-6
This course work also satisfies 6 of the course requirements and the thesis requirement in the doctoral program.

Master’s students are required to present the results of their research at a department professional seminar meeting. The presentation is comparable to what would be presented at a professional conference. Students answer questions from their peers and the faculty in attendance.