

Overview of Differences Among Degrees in School Psychology

Developed by the National Association of School Psychologists, April 2017

	Masters-Level	Specialist-Level	Doctoral-Level
Degree Titles (Examples)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M.A. (Master of Arts) • M.S. (Master of Science) • MEd (Master of Education) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EdS (Education Specialist) • MA (Master of Arts) • MS (Master of Science) • CAS (Certificate of Advanced Study) or CAGS (Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study), often awarded in conjunction with a Master’s degree • PsyS (Specialist in Psychology) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) • PsyD (Doctor of Psychology) • EdD (Doctor of Education)
Credit Hours	Less than 60 graduate semester hours; typically around 36 hours	A minimum of 60 graduate semester hours (or 90 quarter hours)	A minimum of 90 graduate semester hours
Time to Graduation	Typically requires 2 years of full time study at the graduate level	Typically requires a minimum of 3 years of full-time study at the graduate level, including internship	Typically 5 to 6 years of full-time study at the graduate level, including internship
Internship Required	None	1200 hour full-time internship completed on a full-time basis over one year or at least a half-time basis over two consecutive years. At least 600 hours of the internship must be completed in a school setting. ¹	Typically a 1200-1500 hour full-time internship completed on a full-time basis over one year or at least a half-time basis over two consecutive years. At least 600 hours of the internship must be completed in a school setting. ² Some doctoral internships in school psychology provide up to 2000 hours.

¹ A “school setting” is one in which the primary goal is the education of students of diverse backgrounds, characteristics, abilities, disabilities, and needs. Generally, a school setting includes students who are enrolled in Grades pre-K–12 and has both general education and special education services. The school setting has available an internal or external pupil services unit that includes at least one state credentialed school psychologist and provides a full range of school psychology services. Other internship settings, if allowed by the program beyond the 600 hours in a school setting, are consistent with program objectives and may include relevant school psychology activities in other educational contexts within, for example, hospitals, juvenile justice institutions, and community agencies that provide collaborative services for schools.

² Programs may allow doctoral candidates who have met the internship requirement of at least 600 hours in a school setting through a prior, appropriately supervised, specialist-level internship or equivalent experience in school psychology to complete the entire 1500+ hour doctoral school psychology internship in another internship setting that includes appropriately supervised and relevant school psychology activities in other educational contexts, as consistent with the school psychology program’s goals and policies.

Career Options in School Psychology	Limited to none. May qualify for related credentials (e.g., educational diagnostician or psychometrist), or a school psychology credential in one or two states.	The specialist-level degree is considered the entry-level degree in school psychology. No state or territory requires more than a specialist-level degree. A specialist-level degree in school psychology is generally accepted for certification or licensure to provide full professional practice within schools or related educational settings. May qualify for private or independent practice opportunities in some states.	The doctoral degree allows for a broader range of career options in schools, private or independent practice, clinics, hospitals, or research/academia. Individuals with a doctoral degree may experience greater eligibility for various credentials.
School Psychology Program Approval or Accreditation	No approval or accreditation is granted for Masters-level school psychology programs	Specialist-level programs are eligible for NASP Approval/Accreditation	Doctoral-level programs are eligible for NASP Approval/Accreditation <i>and</i> APA Accreditation.
Eligibility for the Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) Credential	No.	Yes.	Yes.
Standards for graduate preparation	No general or national model for Masters-level study in school psychology	The school psychology program ensures that all candidates demonstrate basic professional competencies, <i>including both knowledge and skills</i> , in the 10 domains of school psychology contained within the National Association of School Psychologist’s Practice Model. The 10 domains include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data-Based Decision Making and Accountability • Consultation and Collaboration • Interventions and Instructional Support to Develop Academic Skills • Interventions and Mental Health Services to Develop Social and Life Skills • School-Wide Practices to Promote Learning • Preventive and Responsive Services • Family–School Collaboration Services • Diversity in Development and Learning • Research and Program Evaluation • Legal, Ethical, and Professional Practice 	